A Dialogic Reading of the *Prose Tristan*

Mary Diana Nolan

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Contents

I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that this thesis, 'A Dialogic Reading of the *Prose Tristan*' was composed by me, and is my own work.

Mary Diana Nolan

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to continue the debate surrounding the *Prose Tristan*. Our contribution is a dialogic reading of the text, that is, a reading informed by the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, especially those concerning novelistic discourse. Situating it in the romance tradition of the thirteenth century, that of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, we look at features of the *Prose Tristan* which can be seen to correspond to what Bakhtin considers the essence of novelness, dialogism. There are many dialogic relationships in the text. We assess the tension, in the narrative technique, between the voice of the narrator in its organisational role (centripetal forces), and in its tendency to undermine audience expectation, which results in a decentralising effect, (centrifugal forces). The organisation of chronology is assessed, including, at times, an apparent suppression of chronology. In the skilful use of repetition, through doubling of characters and recurring motifs, we can see important dialogic relationships between characters and themes emerging within the text. The recurring motif of *mise en abyme* provides frequent generic insertions in the text, thereby creating a variety of discourses within the romance, which can also be seen to interact dialogically. These generic insertions, along with the organisation of different voices, identified with both narrator and characters, are discussed in terms of heteroglossia and polyphony, key aspects of Bakhtin's definition of novelness. It is not a perfect fit, but, assessing to what extent the *Prose Tristan,* as a whole, corresponds to this Bakhtinian theoretical framework, enables us to appreciate just how rich, complex and radical its narrative technique is, and, subsequently, its ideology.

List of Abbreviations

CFMA	Classiques français du moyen âge.
Curtis I – Curtis III	*Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*, ed. by Renée L. Curtis, 3 vols (Munich, Leiden, Cambridge: 1963–85). For full reference see bibliography.
SATF	Société des anciens textes français
TLF	Textes littéraires français.
TLF I – TLF IX	*Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*, publié sous la direction de Philippe Ménard, 9 vols, (Genève: Droz, 1987-97). For full reference see bibliography.

Note on the Spelling of Characters' Names

Editors and critics have different practices for the spelling of the names of characters in this romance. In quotations I will follow the spelling of the editor. In my own text I will follow the modern French usage suggested by Emmanuèle Baumgartner, with the following exceptions: Guinevere, Galahad, Kay, Audret and Palamedés, whose names have been spelt in the more familiar anglicised form. The following list cites the main protagonists in the romance:

Audret
Arthur
Brangain
Bréhus
Dinadan
Dinas
Galahad
Gaheriet
Gauvain
Guinevere
Gouvernal
Iseut
Kaherdin
Kay
Lamorat
Lancelot
Marc
Morgain
Palamedés

Chapter One

The *Prose Tristan*: An Overview of the Manuscript Tradition and Scholarship to Date

There are over eighty manuscripts of the *Prose Tristan* which survive to this day. Nine of these are complete versions of the romance, the others are fragments or a series of fragments. The earliest manuscript fragments date from the thirteenth century.[1] The earliest surviving printed edition dates from the late fifteenth century.[2] This is an indication of the text's popularity throughout the Middle Ages.

This popularity probably endured until the sixteenth century. However, for centuries following this, it would appear as though the romance lay dormant and unread. Even when medieval texts were rediscovered and revived by scholars in the late nineteenth century, the length of this romance, and the complexity of its manuscript tradition, deterred many from further investigation. In some ways this still holds true today. Despite these difficulties, though, a series of studies over the past 100 years have gradually shed more light on the *Prose Tristan*. The first major studies carried out concentrated on establishing the manuscript tradition and different identifiable versions of the romance.

Löseth

The first major pioneering study of the manuscript tradition of the *Prose Tristan* was undertaken by the Norwegian, E. Löseth, at the end of the last century.[3] This ground-breaking work made the romance more accessible to scholars, although the layout does not make it easy to follow through the narrative line of the romance. Nevertheless, it is a work still of great value to readers today. Löseth based his study

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[1] For discussion of the manuscript tradition, see Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Le Tristan en Prose: essai d'interprétation d'un roman médiéval*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 133 (Genève: Droz, 1975), pp. 15-98.

[2] For list of printed editions from the Middle Ages see Curtis I, pp. 16-17.

[3] E. Löseth, *Le Roman de Tristan, le roman de Palamède et la compilation de Rusticien de Pise: analyse critique d'après les manuscrits de Paris* (Paris: Bouillon, 1891; repr. New York: Franklin, 1970).

on the twenty-three manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. His study brought to light the existence of more than one version of the romance. He produced an analysis of the text consisting of 570 paragraphs and identified two versions. Version I was based on the manuscript BN f. fr. 757 and covered paragraphs 184 onwards of his analysis. Version II was based on BN f. fr. 334 and covered paragraphs 1-183 of his analysis. In his study, he gave the variants for the respective versions. He noted that Version I was conserved by fewer manuscripts than Version II, and that it only gave the second part of the romance, relating to paragraphs 184 – 570 of his analysis. He therefore concluded that the early part of Version I of the *Prose Tristan* was lost, and that Version II, a cyclical version, was more popular. He judged Version II to be secondary and inferior to Version I.

Löseth maintained that Version I was earlier than Version II.[4] He based his comparative dating on the interpolations of the *Queste del Saint Graal* into the Tristan. The manuscripts of Version I incorporate the *Queste* of Pseudo Robert de Boron, whereas the manuscripts of Version II combine the texts of Pseudo Robert de Boron and the *Vulgate Cycle* of Gautier Map. Believing Pseudo Robert de Boron's *Queste* to be prior to the *Vulgate Cycle*, he accordingly concluded that Version I must be an earlier version. He also maintained that a reference to the *Mort Artu*, in paragraph 146 of his analysis confirmed Version II as being later that Version I. Since then, Pauphilet has shown that in fact it is the *Vulgate* which predates Pseudo Robert de Boron's *Queste*.[5] This undermines Löseth's comparative dating of his two versions. However, Löseth's work did untangle some of the confusion over variants, by identifying at least two distinct versions of the *Prose Tristan*, from paragraph 184 onwards of his analysis. He thereby demonstrated that the first 183 paragraphs had only survived in Version II. He also established that a version of the *Prose Tristan* pre-existed the *Roman de Palamède*, and therefore must have been composed some time between 1215 and 1230. Löseth did not offer any theories on the authorship of the *Prose Tristan*, nor on the pseudonyms Luce del Gat and Helie de Boron found in

[4] See Löseth, *Analyse*, p. xvi.
[5] A. Pauphilet, '*La Queste del Saint Graal* du ms. Bibliothèque Nationale f. fr. 343', *Romania*, 36 (1907), 591-609.

the prologues and epilogues of the manuscripts.

Vinaver

Eugène Vinaver, who wrote extensively on the *Prose Tristan*, agreed with Löseth's theory regarding the existence of two versions of the romance.[6] He dated the first version as having been written some time between 1225 and 1235, attributing authorship to Luce del Gat, and dated the second version to the latter half of the thirteenth century, attributing authorship to Helie de Boron. Vinaver noted a change in tone between the two versions. He felt that the second version was characterised by anti-chivalric ideals and sentiments, primarily embodied in the character of Dinadan. Vinaver was of the opinion that the character of Dinadan changed from one version to another:

> L'auteur de la seconde version apparaît moins sensible aux idées de la haute chevalerie. Il va jusqu'à prêter à un chevalier de la Table Ronde, Dinadan, des propos ironiques et même injurieux à l'égard des coutumes chevaleresques.[7]

However, as Baumgartner has since pointed out, this is an unreliable criterion for distinguishing between the two versions.[8] There are examples of Dinadan's subversive behaviour in both versions. Furthermore, Vinaver mistakenly identified the Vienna manuscript 2542 as being an example of the first version of the romance, which further undermines this particular theory.

Curtis

The debate about the authorship, initiated by Vinaver's above proposal, was later continued by Renée Curtis.[9] Curtis took the prologues and epilogues of the surviving

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[6] Eugène Vinaver, *Etudes sur le Tristan en Prose; les sources, les manuscrits, bibliographie critique* (Paris: Champion, 1925); idem, 'The *Prose Tristan*', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. by R. S. Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 339-347; idem, *A la recherche d'une poétique médiévale* (Paris: Nizet, 1970).

[7] Vinaver, *Etudes*, p. 29.

[8] Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 34.

[9] Renée L. Curtis 'Les deux versions du *Tristan en Prose*: examen de la théorie de Löseth', *Romania*, 84 (1963), 390-98; idem, 'The Problems of the Authorship of the *Prose Tristan*', *Romania*, 74 (1958), 314-38; idem, 'Who wrote the *Prose Tristan*?': A New Look at an Old Problem', *Neophilologus*, 67 (1983), 35-41.

manuscripts as the basis of her study and, subsequently, disagreed with the earlier view that Luce wrote Version I, and that Helie wrote Version II. Curtis rejected the theory that the *Prose Tristan* tradition consisted of two versions which were the work of two different authors. She believed that Luce del Gat began the romance and Helie de Boron completed it. Curtis' theory was based on the fact that no prologue mentions Helie de Boron alone, but neither is there a complete version of the romance which is attributed solely to Luce del Gat in the epilogue. The theory of joint authorship, according to Curtis, would also account for the change in style in the romance at the point where Tristan is banished from Cornwall and begins his career as a knight errant in Logres. Curtis disputed Löseth's theory that the surviving early part of the romance is the second version, and that we have lost the beginning of the first version. Her conclusion was that the first 120-130 folios of her edition of the romance, taken from the manuscript Carpentras, Bibliothèque Municipale 404, should be attributed to Luce del Gat. According to Curtis, the theory that Helie de Boron should be responsible for an entire version is inconsistent with the fact that there is no surviving prologue which mentions him alone. She felt her position was further strengthened because intra-textual references to Luce's work do not occur before paragraph 847 of the third volume of her edition, referred to here as Curtis I-III. She claimed this was logical as Luce would not have felt the need to refer to his own work.

Curtis concluded:

> It is a similar situation to that of the *Roman de la Rose*, begun by one author who wrote a short, compact, first section, and taken up by another who had a very different ideal, added all sorts of extraneous matter, and is responsible for the bulk of the work.[10]

Curtis was not deterred in her argument by the fact that the early part of the surviving manuscripts must post-date 1240, as they incorporate parts of the *Vulgate Cycle*. This was an argument for dating rather than authorship in her opinion. Curtis' argument is flawed as she refused to look beyond a literal reading of the prologues

[10] Curtis, 'Who wrote... ?', p. 40.

and epilogues, introducing assumptions where convenient, but most importantly, neglecting the dating of contemporary works which would have been sources of, or have been influenced by, an existing version of the work.

Baumgartner

With the work of Emmanuèle Baumgartner, studies on the *Prose Tristan* entered a new phase. It is her work on the manuscript tradition, the discernment of different versions, dating and authorship of *Prose Tristan*, which has laid the foundations for subsequent work on the romance.[11] Her standards have been accepted by most scholars, and have formed much of the basis for the nine volumes published in the Textes Littéraires Français series, under the direction of Philippe Ménard, referred to here as TLF I – IX.

Taking Löseth's early study as her starting point, Baumgartner agreed that the early part of the romance, paragraphs 1-183 of his analysis, belong to Version II, and that, from this point on, we have at least two distinct versions of the romance. However, she refused to see the second version as a later, reworked version of the original 'primitive' first version. She drew on the studies of sources of the early part of the romance, carried out by J. D. Bruce, P. H. Coronedi and J. H. Grisward.[12] The findings of their work posit sources such as *Le Roman d'Athis et Prophilias*, from the late twelfth century, and the *Joseph* of Robert de Boron, composed around 1200. These show that the story of Tristan and the tradition linking Tristan with the Round Table were known in the early thirteenth century. Indeed, Béroul had already brought Arthur into his *Tristan* and so the link is not totally unexpected. The author of the *Prose Tristan* would have been familiar with the *Lancelot-Graal*, *La Queste* and *L'Estoire del Saint Graal*, which were completed by 1230 at the earliest. Therefore, the prologue of the *Prose Tristan*, as passed on to us by surviving manuscripts, would

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[11] Baumgartner, *Essai*.

[12] J. D. Bruce, 'A Boccaccio Analogue in the Old French *Prose Tristan*,' *Romanic Review*, 1 (1910), 384-394; P. H. Coronedi, 'La leggenda del San Graal nel *romanzo in prosa di Tristano*', *Archivum Romanicum*, 15 (1931), 83-98; J. H. Grisward, 'Schéma narratif du *Tristan en Prose:* le mythe d'Oedipe', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Pierre Le Gentil par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis* (Paris: SEDES, 1973), pp. 329-339.

date from some time between 1230 and 1235.[13]

According to Baumgartner, what would have been the original version of the *Prose Tristan* is now lost:

> A mon avis, toutes les versions qui nous sont parvenues donnent un texte dont le substrat, assez facile d'ailleurs à isoler, est de Luce, mais qui a été largement remanié et interpolé par Hélie et par d'autres... si l'on se fie en revanche au témoignage des manuscrits... tout semble indiquer que Luce del Gat avait conçu et mené à son terme une première version du *Tristan en prose*, aujourd'hui perdue, et dont la forme originale a été systématiquement modifiée par l'intervention d'Hélie et de ses successeurs.[14]

Baumgartner agreed with Löseth that there are at least two versions from paragraph 184 onwards of his analysis, but she stated that both versions are based on a common source predating 1240, with Version II almost certainly modifying the source to a greater extent than Version I does. She took Löseth's theory of versions one stage further and identified four rather than two versions of the *Prose Tristan*. Version I of the romance is best represented by BN f. fr. 756-757. Version II is best represented by BN f. fr. 335-336 and Vienna 2542. An identifiable Version III is later than the first two versions and interpolates less successfully elements from the *Lancelot-Graal*. It is best represented by BN f. fr. 97, and 100-101. Version IV combines the first three versions and also includes other additions; it is best represented by BN f. fr. 99.[15]

In her study Baumgartner also gives a description of some interesting manuscripts which are not easily classified into any one of the four identified versions. An important exception to this classification is Paris BN f. fr. 103, which, for example, has a similar account of the lovers' deaths to the verse redactions and differs from all other prose manuscripts.[16] It is mostly closely linked to Version II, but does not

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[13] Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 38.
[14] Baumgartner, *Essai*, pp. 92-93.
[15] Baumgartner, *Essai*, pp. 85-87.
[16] When considering the 'verse versions' of Tristan, it is also worth taking note of the *Norse Saga*,

contain references to Luce's text, Pseudo Robert de Boron's *Queste* or to the vulgate *Prose Lancelot*. It also includes the episode of the dragon in Ireland, which is an important episode in the verse redactions but generally excluded from the prose ones. In the other manuscripts of the *Prose Tristan*, Tristan's combat with the dragon is replaced with Tristan's victory over Arthur's champion in defence of the King of Ireland, the reward for which is the hand in marriage of Iseut for Marc.

This manuscript is interesting as it is the most closely related also to Malory's work, and the earliest printed editions of the *Prose Tristan* were based on a manuscript of that family. It was therefore a widely distributed version of the legend, and possibly the best known in the late Middle Ages when printed editions began. The most widely received version of the *Prose Tristan* in the fifteenth century, as far as we can tell, was an aberrant version.

Nevertheless, the majority of the surviving manuscripts are examples of Version II, including the complete manuscripts, Vienna 2537, 2539-40, 2542 and Paris BN f. fr. 334-6. It is the Vienna 2542 manuscript which is the base manuscript for the TLF edition. Baumgartner concluded, and it is generally accepted, that Version II provides what we can call a vulgate version of the *Prose Tristan*.

The Modern Critical Edition

Renée Curtis initiated the first modern critical edition of the romance. Working from Carpentras, Bibliothèque Municipale Manuscrit 404, which is not a complete version, she edited the early section of the romance, which deals with Tristan's ancestry and the early part of his life. Building on this work, under the direction of Philippe Ménard, the edition was continued for TLF. The first volume appeared in 1987 and the ninth volume in 1997. The TLF edition is based on Vienna, National Library Manuscript 2542. It is an example of Version II, like Carpentras 404, and takes up

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which is believed to be a translation of Thomas' poem. It gives a complete version of the romance. See *Tristan et Iseut: les poèmes français, la saga norroise*, ed. by Daniel Lacroix and Philippe Walter, Lettres Gothiques, 15 (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1989), pp. 497-664, which includes an introduction by Daniel Lacroix.

the romance at the point where Curtis' edition leaves it.

The decision to adopt the Vienna 2542 manuscript for the TLF edition was problematic. In his introduction to TLF I, Philippe Ménard praises it in particular for its age. It has been dated to 1300, and thus is one of the oldest surviving manuscripts.[17] However, in what amounts to a review article, Janina Traxler points out that there are many problems with this Vienna manuscript.[18] Her main criticism is that the first 84 folios of this manuscript are a much abridged version of the early stages of the romance, as related by the Carpentras manuscript and others of Version II. These 84 folios are not to be edited, with readers being referred to Curtis' edition. As a result of this decision, the edition of Vienna 2542 cannot be considered complete. If it were to be completed, the discrepancies, between its early folios and the other Version II manuscripts, would raise many questions. Vienna 2542 is the exception among Version II manuscripts rather than the rule. A similar problem arises in TLF VI with the interpolation of the Grail Quest. As is pointed out in the preface, Vienna 2542 is closer to Version III in its account of this section of the romance, than to Version II.[19] Once again Vienna 2542 proves to be an unreliable witness to Version II. In both these areas the Paris, BN f. fr. 335-6 is a superior manuscript. It was, however, rejected as the base manuscript as it dates from 1400, and the language has been modernised.[20] This is unfortunate, since, overall, it would probably have provided a more accurate example of what has been chosen as the vulgate of the *Prose Tristan*.

Having said that, the value of having a modern critical edition of the *Prose Tristan* is

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[17] Philippe Ménard, TLF I, p. 11.

[18] J. Traxler, 'Back to the Future: The Prehistory in Ménard's Edition of the *Prose Tristan* and its implications for Textual Criticism', in *Tristan-Studien: Die Tristan-Rezeption in den Europäischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger and Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald: Reineke, 1993), pp. 155-163.

[19] Philippe Ménard, TLF VI, p. 8. See also the review article of TLF VI, by Philip Bennett, *Modern Language Review*, 90 (1995), 995, for discussion of the use of Micha's *Prose Lancelot* to correct scribal errors in the Vienna 2542 manuscript. It would appear from this decision that the editors are 'making the supposition that the redactor and subsequent scribes intended a slavish reproduction of the *Lancelot* text'.

[20] TLF I, p. 28.

not to be underestimated. It announces yet another stage in the opportunities to study this romance.

We will be referring mainly to the TLF edition, with material occasionally drawn from Curtis' edition of the early stages of the romance. The justification for drawing on Curtis' material is that it is a good example of the early stages of the vulgate, Version II, close to what is provided by Paris, BN f. fr. 335-6.

Partial Editions

There have also been some partial editions of the *Prose Tristan*, not related to the work embarked on by Curtis and the editorial team directed by Ménard. In 1942, F. C. Johnson published the first part of the romance from National Library of Scotland Manuscript 19.1.3.[21] More recently Joël Blanchard edited the episodes of Tristan's captivity at the hands of Marc, episodes related in detail by Version I of the romance, but glossed over quickly by Version II.[22] There also exists an edition of the inserted *lais* in the Vienna 2542 manuscript.[23] These are all valuable contributions to the study of the tradition of the *Prose Tristan*, but perhaps the variety also underlines the desirability and justification of studying as an entity one version that could be read as such in the Middle Ages.

Critical Studies

Since the emergence of Curtis's edited material, Baumgartner's invaluable *Essai* and, subsequently, the gradual publication of the volumes of the TLF edition, there has been a marked increase in the number of articles written on the *Prose Tristan*. The rehabilitation of the romance overlooked and dismissed by earlier critics as a pale imitation of the *Lancelot-Graal*, without its own merits or inherent interest, has

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[21] *Le Grant Ystoire de Monsignor Tristan "li bret": The First Part of the Romance of Tristan from Adv. ms. 19.1.3 in the National Library of Scotland*, ed. by F. C. Johnson (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1942).

[22] *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose: les deux captivités de Tristan*, ed. by Joël Blanchard (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976).

[23] *Les Lais du Roman de Tristan en Prose d'après le manuscrit de Vienne 2542*, ed. by T. Fotitch (texte) et R. Steiner (musique) (Munich: Fink, 1974).

begun.

A good example of this is a collaborative work edited by Jean Dufournet.[24] The variety of aspects of the text dealt with in *Nouvelles Recherches* reflect its richness and complexity. Different scholars have considered various aspects of the text, from the adoption of interlace as a technique, with the interpolation of material from the *Lancelot-Graal* as part of the exploitation of interlace, to the use of dialogue in the romance, isolated episodes/adventures in the romance, the treatment of the love theme, chivalry, etc. However, much of this work, and other articles, tend to consider these features of the romance in relative isolation. There is still a shortage of extended work on the whole of the *Prose Tristan,* which might attempt to assess it holistically, or which use a conceptual, argument-based approach. Although one needs to approach the printed edition with caution, and be aware of some imperfections, it does now render feasible such an approach.

Van Coolput

An exception is Colette-Anne Van Coolput's thesis, published in 1986.[25] Van Coolput's study is based on Jauss' theories of inter-textuality and aesthetic of reception.[26] She sees the *Prose Tristan* as a *récepteur productif* of the earlier Grail prose romances, and therefore an invaluable guide as to how that genre was received and interpreted by the audience and writers of its own era.[27] Van Coolput begins by concentrating on the account of Tristan's ancestry, the prehistory in the romance.[28] She also examines the conclusion of the romance in comparison to the earlier Grail romances, and the interpolations of the Grail Quest episodes into the text. Her conclusion is that the *Prose Tristan* is a prose romance in the Arthurian tradition

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[24] *Nouvelles recherches sur le Tristan en Prose*, ed. by Jean Dufournet, (Paris: Champion, 1990).
[25] Colette-Anne Van Coolput, *Aventures querant et le sens du monde: aspects de la réception productive des premiers romans du graal cycliques dans le Tristan en Prose*, Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series I / Studia XIV (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986)
[26] Hans-Robert Jauss, *Pour une esthéthique de la réception*, trans. by Claude Maillard (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).
[27] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 7.
[28] It is worth noting in passing that Van Coolput rejects the Vienna 2542 manuscript's abridged version of the ancestry of Tristan, for the reasons mentioned above, and refers to the Paris BN f. fr. 335 manuscript in her study. See *Aventures querant*, p. 10.

which resists and questions its predecessors:

> Le refus de concevoir l'histoire arthurienne comme une transposition de l'Histoire du salut est évidemment en rapport étroit avec le fait que le *Tristan en prose* s'attaque au mythe du Graal: ce sont là les deux faces d'une même réaction contre un système de valeurs généralisé dans les premiers romans du Graal cycliques.[29]

There can be no doubt that the *Prose Tristan* is a text which raises many questions about the tradition with which it is interacting. However, it is perhaps an over-simplification to argue that it rejects the contents and ethos of its predecessors so categorically. Indeed, it uses this material extensively. Part of our aim will be to highlight the complexity of the *Prose Tristan* in its treatment of its tradition, and its double-voiced, dialogic, qualities which defy unequivocal interpretations of its ideology.

In the final chapter Van Coolput emphasises the role of the narrator in what she sees as this fundamental shift in ideology:

> La première *senefiance* du *Tristan en prose*, c'est d'avoir déplacé l'origine du sens, de l'avoir mise au présent, là où la main humaine intervient pour former les signes.[30]

Van Coolput's study raises important and interesting issues with regard to the inter-textual nature of the *Prose Tristan*, and its relationship to the Grail tradition of the earlier prose romances. Her conclusion, as stated above, is that the *Prose Tristan* clearly rejects the ideology which precedes it, subverting the belief that Arthurian history should be interpreted as an analogy for the history of salvation. With this eschatological dimension absent from the text, the characters embody perpetual existentialist anxiety, best expressed by Dinadan's famous remark. Van Coolput quotes Dinadan:

> Je suis un chevalier errant qui chascun jor voiz aventures querant et le sens du monde; més point n'en puis trover, ne point n'en puis a mon oés

[29] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 187.
[30] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 217.

retenir.

She sums up as follows:

> Cette phrase symbolise à nos yeux le désarroi des personnages du *Tristan en prose* livrés à un devenir dont la signification leur échappe.[31]

The Next Stage

This present study owes much to what has gone before. The unravelling of a manuscript tradition, along with a modern critical edition, have made the romance very accessible and full advantage has been taken of this. When referring to the *Prose Tristan* it must be borne in mind that a definitive edition or version does not exist. The *Prose Tristan* is a fragmented and episodic text and this is borne out by the varying versions and editions. It is beyond the scope of this study to pay constant attention to variants and different versions; therefore, we will be concentrating mainly on the vulgate. Complete vulgate versions of the romance, endowed with a certain scribal unity by a manuscript, have survived. This can be seen to confirm the value of trying to approach a vulgate of the text, established by critics, with a certain perceived unity of composition in mind.

It is essential to read the *Prose Tristan* in relation to its preceding romance tradition of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from the much briefer poetic versions of the *Tristan* legend to the encyclopaedic globalising tendencies of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle. However, the text also has an interest and value inherent in its own composition. As Curtis once said:

> Il faudrait à présent examiner d'un peu plus près la valeur intrinsèque du roman; il faudrait chercher à démêler pourquoi il existait au Moyen Age plus de soixante-quinze copies de cette oeuvre pourtant bien longue.[32]

While bearing in mind the *Prose Tristan*'s relationship with its tradition, this study will

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[31] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 85. She points out that this quote is taken from manuscript Paris BN f. fr. 334 folio 334. The corresponding lines in the Vienna 2542 manuscript are found in TLF IV, p. 242. This statement will be further examined in Chapter Four in relation to the character of Dinadan.

[32] Curtis I, p. 11.

concentrate on the internal intricacies of the narrative technique, examining further the role of the narrator, the use of repetition and the variety of discourse in the romance. The main critical tool will be Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism as relevant to novelistic discourse.

The value of using Bakhtin's theory of dialogism as a critical tool lies in the emphasis based on both narrative technique and inter-textual relationships. Bakhtin's theories can be usefully applied to any narrative fiction seen to be a literary antecedent of the novel. Reading the *Prose Tristan* dialogically will help to stress the innovative side of the romance, a feature in danger of being overlooked in inter-textual study where it is assessed mainly in terms of difference and absence. Searching for what Bakhtin saw as the essence of 'novelness' will help bring out the richness and complexity of the romance and highlight the implications this has for interpretations of its content. The *Prose Tristan* lends itself well to this comprehensive approach, given the complexity of its narrative technique and its relationship with its tradition. The inter-textual relationship in question is mainly the *Prose Tristan's* interaction with the *Lancelot-Graal*.

In Chapter Two there is a presentation of Bakhtin's theory as it will be used in this study, followed by a discussion of different critical approaches to romance. Chapter Three concentrates on the narrative technique, examining the role of the narrator and the chronological organisation of the text. Chapter Four focuses on repetition, achieved through doubling of characters and recurring motifs, and the nature of these relationships both within the text and inter-textually. The final chapter assesses the different types of discourse in the text, heteroglossia, looking at the voices of the narrator, characters and the use of generic insertions. The conclusion will draw together these different strands of the narrative technique and assess their effect as a whole, in relation to the tradition which preceded the text, and as an anticipation of what was to follow.

Chapter Two

Dialogism and Romance

Dialogism

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, or dialogic approach to language and literature, despite not being developed with romance specifically in mind, will prove to be most useful when reading the *Prose Tristan*.[1] The text lends itself to this multi-faceted approach, which in turn embraces a text seen to be part of the history of narrative genres in any way related to the novel. The aim is not to submit the text to dogmatic and exhaustive analysis based solely on Bakhtin's theory, but, rather, to uncover and illuminate features of the *Prose Tristan* which might otherwise remain unobserved. This, in turn, will not preclude the possibility of Bakhtin's thought being further illuminated, or slightly qualified, by our reading of the *Prose Tristan*.

When approaching romance, via Bakhtin, the starting point of the analysis has to be his theory of genres, and in particular, of the novel. This is not the ultimate definition of genre, and may be challenged from various angles. Nevertheless, we need to follow his thought through in order to understand from where he draws his definitions of 'novelness', which ultimately prove so useful when reading our text. The quotations of Bakhtin are taken from translations of his work. As pointed out by Michael Holquist, in relation to other translations of Bakhtin and his own:

> The peculiarity of Bakhtin's Russian is invoked to justify a certain awkwardness in the translated text. We believe the matter is more complicated. We have sought to make a translation at the level of images of a whole language (*obraz jazyka*).
>
> The translations are complete. Bakhtin is not an efficient writer, but we believe he pays his way.[2]

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[1] The term 'dialogism' was never used by Bakhtin himself, but as Michael Holquist points out: '...the history of Bakhtin's reception seems to suggest that if we are to continue to think about his work in a way that is useful, some synthetic means must be found for categorizing the different ways he meditated on dialogue.' Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 15.

[2] Holquist, 'A Note on Translation', in Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin:

Despite any inherent drawbacks, and the density of the text for readers of English, these translations do provide valuable, and unique, access to Bakhtin's work for anglophones who do not read Russian.

Bakhtin's Theory of Genres

Bakhtin's views on language, literature and literary history are intrinsically linked to his genre theory. Pavel Medvedev's *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, attributed by some critics to Bakhtin himself, provides a good starting point for some of Bakhtin's main views on genre[3]. Medvedev's argument consists mainly of countering the approach of the Russian Formalists to literature. He refused to see literary genres as the sum of literary devices without social and ideological significance. On the contrary, he stated that they actually carry and shape human experience. For him the work or genre constitues the whole, but it is not the combination of parts which constitute the whole. A reader responds to a work as a complete utterance, rather than to a succession of letters or words. These utterances, if classed generically, are specific ways of visualising reality. Therefore, choosing a genre can shape the creator's vision.[4]

These ideas perhaps apply more to a critic's approach than to a general reader's, as it should be borne in mind that most readers' initial experience of a text is a rather fragmented one. The average reader is dealing with parts before arriving at a whole. Having said that, an identifiable genre, with all this implies in the way of a certain contract between artist and audience, based on ideology, literary conventions and audience expectation, should provide a certain framework into which the reader incorporates his / her partial reading.[5]

University of Texas Press, 1981), p. xiii.

[3] Pavel Medvedev (and Mikhail Bakhtin), *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. by Albert J. Wehrle (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1985). Bakhtin's name has been associated with this work as author. There is a debate among scholars as to who actually wrote the work. For the purpose of this chapter Medvedev will be referred to as author.

[4] Medvedev, p. 134.

[5] See also Hans-Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by T. Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), Chapter 3, 'Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature', for a

Bakhtin's own ideas on genres, formulated at a later date, are close to Medvedev's approach. According to him, an utterance is a unit of communication, framed in a given context with a beginning and an end. It can range in length and complexity from one word to a whole novel. Bakhtin links the concept of utterance to the concept of genre:

> Language is realised in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written)... these utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style... but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects - thematic content, style and compositional structure - are inseparably linked to the whole of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable type of these utterances. These we may call speech genres.[6]

Within speech genres Bakhtin distinguishes between primary (simple) and secondary (complex) speech genres. Literary genres are considered secondary genres, as they are 'highly developed and organised cultural communication (primarily written)'.[7] What interests us most in our discussion is secondary genres. From now on when the term 'genre' is used, it will be referring to literature, unless otherwise stated.

Bakhtin does not view language as a stable abstract norm, except when treated in grammar out of any given context; it therefore needs to be filled and shaped by context, which shape both the speaker's intention and the listener's understanding:

> Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems; within these various systems (identical in the abstract) are elements of language filled with various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different

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discussion of the importance of generic intertexts for the reception of a work.

[6] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres' in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. by Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 60-122 (p. 60).

[7] Bakhtin, 'Problem of Speech Genres', in *Speech Genres*, p. 61.

sound.[8]

Here, Bakhtin rejects a purely structural approach to the use of language, be it everyday language or more elaborate uses of language. Any interpretative exercise has to take into consideration the full context of the utterance.

Literary language, both spoken and written, although it is unitary not only in its shared, abstract, linguistic markers but also in its forms for conceptualising these abstract markers, is itself stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system, that is, in the forms that carry its meanings.[9]

Here, Bakhtin indicates that the identifiable form of a literary work will contribute to its overall meaning, and proceeds to give his definition of genres:

> This stratification is accomplished first of all by the specific organisms called genres. Certain features of language (lexicological, semantic, syntactic) will knit together with the intentional aim, and with the overall accentual system inherent in one or another genre... Certain features of language take on the specific flavour of a given genre: they knit together with specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents characteristic of the given genre.[10]

Each genre is suited to expressing a different aspect of reality and is regarded, by Medvedev and Bakhtin, as a combination of insights and blind spots. Specific genres are better suited to some purposes than to others. Medvedev gives the examples of short stories and novellas in comparison to novels.[11] Short stories and novellas see life in anecdotal terms, whereas novels strive to capture the fundamental character of an epoch and its socio-cultural background.

This raises an interesting point with regard to the prose romances and the verse

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[8] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 259-422 (p 288).
[9] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 288.
[10] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *Dialogic Imagination,* pp. 288-289.
[11] Medvedev, pp. 134-135. When Medevedev refers to the genre of the novel, it is in relation to the classic nineteenth-century novel. His claims would not apply to the New Novel.

romances. For example, Chrétien de Troyes' complete *Lancelot* romance is only one episode in the much longer *Prose Lancelot*, although we would not consider it to have the anecdotal quality of a novella. In form the longer prose romance resembles a chronicle covering not only the hero's whole biography but expanding in the cyclic versions to incorporate a considerable pre-history to the main narrative. The transition from the verse to the prose version of the *Tristan* legend is slightly different as Béroul and Thomas do presuppose a whole biography, as well as referring to a previous generation. As they have come down to us both versions are fragmented, and Béroul's version seems perhaps to have been a compilation of separate episodes. This inherent structure of the *Tristan* legend may have pre-disposed it for re-use and expansion in the thirteenth-century prose romance style.

Bakhtin wrote that genres and sub-genres evolved and changed as people's experiences changed and expanded with time. He had a teleological view of literary history and he described how the 'polyphonic' novel as a genre, first produced by Dostoevsky, provided the most complete conceptualisation of the human condition. Dostoevsky heralded a new artistic task which consists of constructing a polyphonic novel, in which the hero's voice 'is constructed in the same way that the voice of the author himself is constructed in the usual novel... Dostoevsky's plan presupposes the plurality of consciousnesses of equal value.'[12]

This is expressed in terms of progress:

> We consider the creation of the polyphonic novel an enormous step forward not only in the development of novelistic prose, i.e. of all the genres developing within the orbit of the novel, but in general in the development of the artistic thinking of mankind. It seems to us that it is possible to speak directly of a special polyphonic mode of artistic thinking, which extends beyond the bounds of the novelistic genre. This mode of thinking opens up aspects of man - above all the thinking human consciousness and the dialogical sphere of man's existence - which cannot be artistically mastered from a monological position.[13]

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[12] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 2nd edn, trans. by R. W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, 1973), pp. 4–5.
[13] Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 228.

This attitude, which presupposes the superiority of achievements over time , akin to evolution, is problematic for an appreciation of Medieval literature in general. It is an attitude typical of the era in which Bakhtin wrote. In Bakhtin's work, romance is viewed as one of the precursors of the novel, but, inherent in this, is a belief that it is more primitive and less complex. Using some of Bakhtin's own criteria and arguments, part of our aim will be to show that this teleological and hierarchical view of literary history can be challenged, by bringing out in the *Prose Tristan* the very qualities attributed to these later texts, novels.

With Bakhtin viewing history as a continuum in time and literary genres as interacting with their context, it would follow that change and development in a genre represent a shift in ideology and artistic thinking. It is not simply the wearing out of familiar devices which accounts for literary change. These literary changes have to be interacting with historical changes. Thus, new genres, as new forms of thought, should also be seen as capable of influencing people in a social context. A new genre does not render former genres obsolete, but does influence their status.

What it is important to retain so far from this brief discussion of Bakhtin's genre theory is firstly that, he advocates taking into account, as far as that is possible, the context in which the 'utterance' was produced. Secondly, genres are an example of form shaping ideology, which interact with their context, being both influenced by it and having an influence on it. In Bakhtin's theory, literary history and the history of genres are also inextricably linked. We will therefore need to consider how he saw the genre of romance as fitting into the history of the novel, and how this can enlighten our reading of the *Prose Tristan*, while still bearing in mind that we are wary of the implications of Bakhtin's teleological view of literary history.

Literary History

Bakhtin saw literary history as revolving precisely around the struggle of genres in a social context. He saw genres as acting as 'organs of memory'. A genre is a means by which an experience can be carried from one generation to the next:

> A literary genre by its very nature reflects the most stable, 'eternal' tendencies in the development of literature. The undying elements of the archaic are always preserved in the genre. True, these archaic elements are preserved in the genre only thanks to their constant renewal and, so to speak contemporisation. Genre is always the same and not the same, always old and new simultaneously. A genre is reborn and renewed at every stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of the given genre... A genre lives in the present but it always remembers its past, its beginnings. Genre is the representative of the creative memory in the process of literary development.[14]

Therefore, genres allow us to remember the past, a past which must have contained the potential to shape the present, and they provide an insight into the history of thought.

As already pointed out, Bakhtin's view of the literary history was essentially teleological. His main interest lay in the history of the novel and prose, that is, the history of certain narrative genres. He saw the history of the novel as consisting of two major stylistic lines which he dated back to ancient literature. He distinguished between the current which includes Greek romance or the Byzantine novel, and another, which includes the Socratic dialogue, Menippean satire and Lucianic dialogue. The first current is usually identified as the precursor of the novel, because of its narrative content. Bakhtin preferred to see the second line as containing the germ of the true spirit of 'novelness'.[15] As Cesare Segre points out, it would probably be more accurate to consider both lines as contributing equally to the formation of the novel, including romance texts which Bakhtin categorised with the first line:

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[14] Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 87.
[15] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 366 ff.

> It is probably futile to debate the pre-eminence given to one element rather than the other, to polyphony rather than narrative. But it is not unfruitful to consider that the experimental and heteroglot texts constitute, outside the novel's development but also within it, a discontinuous, frequently interrupted series, while the narrative genre that has been called *roman* since the twelfth century develops, by means of its very transformations, uninterruptedly and coherently to the present day.[16]

Segre's article was originally written in French, where the linguistic usage of *roman* predisposes a perception of continuity between romance and the novel more easily than in English usage, where this distinction predisposes a perception of discontinuity.

For Bakhtin, working to explain the constitution of the apogee of narrative evolution, the Dostoevskian novel, the representation of language became paramount. According to Bakhtin the main difference between the two stylistic lines is precisely the representation of language and the extent to which the language in the text is dialogised by coming into contact with other language types. The term which Bakhtin uses to describe these different language types is 'heteroglossia'. Bakhtin noted that what he called the 'second stylistic line' exploits heteroglossia, and thereby the novel's potential, to a greater extent. It contains more 'novelness' than the first stylistic line, due to the incorporation of these different types of language. He saw the first line as being more unified in tone and style and therefore not in a direct evolutionary line with Dostoevsky.

It is difficult to define taxonomic or compositional norms for what he called the second line:

> For the most part novelistic prose flourished in other generic formats: in realistic novellas, in satires, in some biographical and autobiographical forms, and in certain purely rhetorical genres (for example, in the diatribe), in historical and, finally, in epistolary genres. In all these forms the germs of novelistic prose can be found, that is, there is an orchestration of meaning by means of heteroglossia.[17]

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[16] Segre, 'What Bakhtin left unsaid: The Case of the Medieval Romance', in, *Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes* ed. by Kevin Brownlee and Marina S. Brownlee (Hanover: University Presses of New England, 1985), pp. 23-45 (p. 26).

[17] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 371.

The difference between the two stylistic lines implied differing world views, and also different pre-conditions. In this instance, Bakhtin seemed to slip into defining the novel as a by-product of social change:

> A sealed-off interest group, caste or class, existing within an internally unitary and unchanging core of its own cannot serve as socially productive soil for the development of the novel unless it becomes riddled with decay or shifted somehow from its state of internal balance and self-sufficiency.[18]

For Bakhtin, then, the novelisation of the first line reflected a shift in a previously unquestioned ideological viewpoint, represented by a single and unitary language, and an awareness of its situation as a posited view among others, rather than a given truth. This is the difference between monologic and dialogic literature:

> The situation is analogous in those cases where a single and unitary language is at the same time another's language. What inevitably happens is a decay and collapse of the religious, political and ideological authority connected with that language. It is during this process of decay that the decentred language consciousness of prose art ripens, finding its support in the social heteroglossia of national languages that are actually spoken.[19]

If we interpret Bakhtin's writing using the dialogic approach, that he himself advocates, we must take into account that he was writing in a context which was still very much aware of the influence of Marxist dogma on the sclerosis of a Czarist society, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, for our purposes, it is still worth retaining the notion that the precursor of the novel, this second stylistic line, in its form and content, challenged a previously accepted ideology or way of thinking: in a literary context, a previously accepted genre.

In his earlier essay, 'Epic and Novel', Bakhtin goes even further by describing the

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[18] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 368.
[19] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 370.

novel as being anti-generic:

> The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them.[20]

At the same time as Bakhtin separates and theorises two pre-novelistic trends, he admits that they 'criss-cross and are interwoven with each other in a number of different ways'.[21] Significantly, one example he gives of this is the classical chivalric romance.

Bakhtin perceives early chivalric romance as being on the boundary between epic and novel, tending more towards the novelistic pole. This is due to what he calls its 'decentralised consciousness'. Despite what could be described as a firm and stable socio-economic background, the chivalric romance thrived in a world of alien cultures, especially that of Celtic mythology. Therefore, there was an obvious gap between subject matter and social reality. This was in contrast to the contemporary epic which dealt with historical figures, native and national. Chivalric romance is based on the tradition of translating and reworking material which originates from another culture. There was a great deal of interaction with other cultures and languages. However, despite some appreciation of the variety of the romance tradition, in his comments which follow Bakhtin displays a clear ignorance of the complexity of romance and the society in which it flourished:

> Translation, reworking, re-conceptualising, re-accenting - manifold degrees of mutual inter-orientation with alien discourse, alien intentions - these were the activities shaping the literary consciousness that created the chivalric romance... Material and language were not given as a seamless whole (as they were for the creators of the epic), but were rather fragmented, separated from each other, had to seek each other out.
>
> It is this that defines the uniqueness of style in chivalric romances. There is not a drop of naiveté in it, in language or in speech. Naiveté (if it is to

[20] Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel' in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 3–40 (p. 5).
[21] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 376.

> be found at all) is due to the still un-differentiated and rigid unity of the dominant class. This unity permeated all aspects of the alien material, and could reformulate and re-accent them to such a degree that the world of these novels appears to have the unitary quality of epic. [22]

Here, Bakhtin would seem to imply that romance was a didactic genre which appropriated material for its own unified, monologic end. This is a view with which we do not agree. We should also note that most authors of chivalric romances were in fact interacting with these 'alien cultures' and 'other languages' at two or three removes. The authors of the *Prose Tristan* and the *Prose Lancelot* were re-writing a tradition which had materialised in French over a period of two or three generations.

However, Bakhtin showed more interest in the early prose romances and goes so far as to say that it was this shift into prose in the romance tradition which gave birth to European novelistic prose. The language consciousness was sufficiently decentred and relativised to permit 'novelisation'. The language associated with these early prose works took its material and inspiration from other languages available.

Despite this observation he ultimately saw romance as providing stylistic norms:

> The chivalric romance provided a discourse proper to all possible situations and events in life, while at the same time everywhere opposing itself to vulgar discourse and its coarse ways.[23]

He saw this dominant style as being dialogised with 'vulgar' discourse in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. According to Bakhtin, the dialogues between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are truly 'novelistic'. The dialogic potential hidden in this literary style, that of a norm capable of being contested, had been brought to the surface.

Furthermore, in Bakhtin's view, the language of chivalric romance was full of verbal references to literary objects and images, in opposition to the real world and real life. It was not sufficient to enable a challenging and changing world view. Bakhtin puts

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[22] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 377.
[23] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 384.

this down to chivalric romance's pose of respectability and ideological rootlessness.[24] For Bakhtin, then, chivalric romance remained very much within the confines of the first stylistic line on this matter. Cervantes would be the first author to fully dialogise the discourse of chivalric romance. This view will be challenged in the course of our dialogic reading of the *Prose Tristan*.

Indeed, as Bakhtin himself said, there are many points of overlap between the two stylistic lines which precede the novel. It is precisely these areas of overlap which are of interest in The *Prose Tristan*. If we see literary history as a struggle between generic and anti-generic forces, translatable as centripetal (organising) forces and centrifugal (dispersing) forces, it enables us to see the text in a new light, that is, as a chivalric romance shaped by centripetal forces and adopting a particular form and ideology, but, at the same time, containing elements of novelness, centrifugal forces, as it prepares the ground for breaking free of its generic limits.

The following chapters will concentrate on what can be interpreted as elements of 'novelness' within the *Prose Tristan*. At this stage it is worth defining more specifically Bakhtin's criteria for 'novelness'.

Novels and Novelisation

Bakhtin developed three major theories of the novel and novelisation.[25] The first is formulated in his essays 'Discourse in the Novel', 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' and 'Epic and Novel', which concentrate on the use of language in the novel. It is in these essays that he develops the concepts of heteroglossia and polyphony. Heteroglossia means variety of discourse, and polyphony refers to the orchestration and organisation of these in a non-hierarchical way. His essay 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope' examines the conceptualisation of historical time and social space, individual character and moral action. His third theory of the novel is

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[24] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 385.

[25] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 300 ff.

based on his ideas of carnival, best known from his work on Rabelais.[26]

Double-voiced Language and Novelness

It is in his essay 'Epic and Novel' that Bakhtin touches on the anti-generic qualities of novelness, inherent in its open-endedness and destruction of what he called epic distance in time:

> From the very beginning the novel was made of different clay than the other already completed genres; it is a different breed, and with it and in it is born the future of all literature... In the presence of the novel all other genres somehow have a different resonance. A lengthy battle for the novelisation of the other genres began.[27]

This novelisation of other genres does not imply the establishment of a new norm. It is more a liberation from the restraints of their current norm, allowing for scope and development, especially in the variety of discourse.

As has already been said, novelness, which precedes the appearance of the novel as genre, is not confined or reducible to fixed generic norms. It is more a history of tendencies in various genres. Its main feature is to underline and point out the relativity of language.

The novel is the expression of a Galilean perception of language, one that denies the absolutism of a single and unitary language - that is, that refuses to acknowledge its own language as the sole verbal and semantic centre of the ideological world.[28].

This is not absolute relativism on Bakhtin's part, but rather a refusal to privilege one language over another. This is achieved by dialogising the heteroglossia, that is allowing different languages in the work to interact, taking into consideration their sociological significance as a way of exploring beliefs.

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[26] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, consists of the translation of all four of these essays.
[27] Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 39.
[28] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 366.

Both stylistic lines which preceded the novel contain inserted genres. According to Bakhtin the first line incorporates these genres, but their heteroglossia remains outside the work's language, that is it does not interact with the main language of the work. However, in the second line where they actually serve to introduce heteroglossia to the work, they influence and are influenced by the main language of the text.[29] It is on this basis that we must assess the generic insertions in the *Prose Tristan*. What counts is not merely the inclusion of other languages in a work, but the manner in which these other languages are included, and the effect they have on one another.

Style in the novel, as Bakhtin sees it, is the dialogisation of styles. That is to say, a given style is actually seen as 'other' in the eyes of another, and therefore not a given absolute. It is this dialogisation of styles that allows consciousnesses to interact. Here we approach the definition of dialogue as interaction, not argument or exchange or contrast, and not contradiction of two self-contained phenomena, as in dialectic. Dialogism refers to relationships between entities or voices that only can exist in dialogue, which communicate as a way of being. Dialogue cannot exist between two abstract concepts.

According to Bakhtin, poetry does not allow this interaction of consciousnesses, as it is reducible to one voice and one tone. It may be aware of heteroglossia but because of its form, inherent in the speaking I of the poet, it cannot interact with other languages or voices directly.

Bakhtin is also careful to draw the distinction between the polysemic poetic word, and the double-voiced word in prosaic discourse:

> A symbol cannot presuppose any fundamental relationship to another's word, to another's voice. The polysemy of the poetic symbol presupposes the unity of a voice with which it is identical, and it presupposes that such a voice is completely alone within its own discourse. As soon as another's voice, another's accent, the possibility of another's point of view breaks through this play of the symbol, the poetic

[29] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 410-411.

plane is destroyed and the symbol is translated onto the plane of prose.[30]

This affirmation does not preclude some poetry from being dialogic and some prose monologic. However, polysemy in itself is not sufficient to qualify as double-voiced discourse. Just as prose in itself is not sufficient to be described as double-voiced.[31]

What Bakhtin calls double-voiced discourse is central to novelness. There can be varying degrees of double-voicedness. A clear example would be the use of parody when imitating or using a previously heard voice. Such a use of language undermines the idea of there being a single language of truth, all language is unfinalisable:

> The language of the prose writer deploys itself according to degrees of greater or lesser proximity to the author and to his ultimate instantiation: certain aspects of language directly and immediately express (as in poetry) the semantic and expressive intentions of the author, others refract these intentions; the author does not meld completely with any of these words, but rather accents each of them in a particular way - humorously, ironically, parodically, and so forth.[32]

The same ideas can be applied to the speech of characters, who are influenced by each other's speech and the narrator's. Heteroglossia can enter the text through a character's speech. The narrator can also transmit a character's thought or speech through his own language, identifying with or distancing himself from respective viewpoints. This is another important point made by Cesare Segre.[33] Segre believes that Medieval romance paved the way for the polyphonic novel, precisely through its ability to vary the narrator's distance from characters' speech and actions. It would appear to be a feature of romance overlooked by Bakhtin. It will be examined as part of the narrative technique, as we try to perceive to what extent double-voiced discourse emerges in the *Prose Tristan*.

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[30] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 328.

[31] One could perhaps challenge Bakhtin's view on symbolic monologism on the grounds that the polyvalence of many symbols implies polygenesis and the conflict within the speaking voice of the 'languages' articulated by the symbol.

[32] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 299. See Sarah Kay, *The Romance of the Rose*, Critical Guides to French Texts, 110 (London: Grant & Cutler Ltd., 1995), Chapter 2, 'Allegory and Irony', for a discussion of how this concept can also apply to allegorical verse.

[33] Cesare Segre, 'What Bakhtin left unsaid', pp. 23-45.

The Chronotope

Chronotope, meaning literally time-space, refers to the manipulation of temporal and spatial dimensions in narrative. Chronotopes are the most important organisational factor behind the narrative genres, as they are 'the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative'.[34] They are the form-shaping ideology behind a narrative as they concretise and actualise thought. The images of characters have to be portrayed in a given context and specific conditions. These conditions also shape the perspective of the reader, as they determine the representability of events. They make plot possible rather than simply containing it. The context has a determining effect on events as well as on understanding. Bakhtin sees this as being linked to historical poetics, as history and context determine the field in which events will unfold. He lists different chronotopes which have emerged, in chronological order, such as adventure chronotopes, everyday adventure, biography, mythology and eschatology chronotopes.[35] He sees Goethe's *Bildungsroman* as making crucial chronotopic discoveries which led to the development of the realist novel in the nineteenth century.[36] Once more Bakhtin's evolutionism comes to the fore, a perspective which has been largely abandoned by late twentieth-century scholars. However, his insight into the organisation of texts remains a valuable one.

For Bakhtin the variety of chronotopes in literature and in world views proves that a variety of senses of time and space are possible - there is no one abstract mathematical constant. Chronotopes are inherently historical and contextual, although different chronotopes may be in competition with each other at any given time or in a dialogical relationship.

Bakhtin saw the chivalric romance as using the chronotope of 'adventure time', which

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[34] Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics', in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84-258 (p. 250).
[35] Bakhtin, 'The Chronotope', in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 100-151.
[36] Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)', in *Speech Genres,* pp. 10-59.

he associated with Greek romance:

> Time breaks down into a sequence of adventure-fragments, within which it is organised abstractly and technically; the connection of time to space is also merely technical. We encounter here the same simultaneities and disjunctions in time, the same play with distance and proximity, the same retardations.
>
> ...
>
> But along-side this, a radically new element appears in the adventure-time of the chivalric romance... The whole world becomes miraculous, so the miraculous becomes ordinary without ceasing at the same time to be miraculous.[37]

According to Bakhtin, the chivalric hero openly seeks and thrives on adventure. Chance itself becomes personified by good and evil fairies in enchanted locations.

Bakhtin was careful to distinguish between chronotopes and chronotopic motifs. A chronotopic motif is like a 'congealed event', 'a condensed reminder of the kind of time and space that typically functions there' [the location associated with the motif].[38] An example of chronotopic motif in chivalric romance would be a forest, a fountain, or a castle, expected to contain elements of the 'other world'. Certain factors arising in these situations come to be expected by the reader. For example, in the *Prose Tristan*, the fountain is often a locus for a suspension in the knight's wandering or action, followed by either a discussion of the nature of love or a sung *lai* on the same subject.

In our study of the narrative technique we will consider how the treatment of time in the *Prose Tristan* is different from the *Lancelot-Graal*, which is more eschatological and utopian in its vision. Seen as a chronotopic difference it is a fundamental difference in organisation and ideology between the two romances, and one which has been open to differing interpretations. The undermining of the celestial chivalry ideal has been seen as either a regression or a progression in the sphere of romance. Has romance reverted to the ideal of secular chivalric ideal? or has it exhausted both

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[37] Bakhtin, 'The Chronotope', in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84-258 (pp. 151-152).
[38] Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, p. 374.

ideals in its search for some other meaning, perhaps a meaning which it has not yet found? We will need to examine other aspects of novelness before being able to make a judgement of that kind.

Carnival

Bakhtin's work on the carnavalesque and laughter is most fully developed in his Rabelais book, and is slightly different from his writings on language in the novel and chronotopes.[39] It nonetheless is an important area of novelness in his theory and crops up at various points in essays and in the Dostoevsky book.

For Bakhtin, carnival heralds liberation, eccentricity, familiarisation and profanation:

> Carnival brings together, unites, weds and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the lowly, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid etc.[40]

With this comes the right to be different, 'other'. In the chronotope essay Bakhtin talks about rogues, clowns and fools creating their own chronotope alongside a dominant one, reflecting a will and a right to interpret and act differently.[41] These characters serve to introduce laughter into the work, although carnival laughter is deeply ambivalent. Bakhtin traces it back to ritual laughter:

> Carnivalistic laughter is also directed toward a higher order - toward the change of authorities and truths, toward the change of world orders. Laughter encompasses both poles of change, and it relates to the very process of change, to crisis itself.[42]

In *Rabelais and His World* Bakhtin emphasises the body and obscenity, yet as Morson and Emerson point out his Rabelais book is essentially anti-chronotopic: In Rabelais and the folklore he imbibed, value is divorced from any specific time

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[39] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
[40] Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 101.
[41] Bakhtin, 'The Chronotope', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 159.
[42] Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 104.

frame, real history is not registered, and space becomes thoroughly fantastic. Laughter under these conditions merely decrowns and any finished image is portrayed as repressive.[43]

The element of carnival which is most pertinent to novelness, as it interests us, is parody and its potential for dialogue. There is a slight element of the grotesque in the *Prose Tristan*, perhaps through the depiction of Marc, and perhaps through references to physical hardships and injuries inflicted on knights errant. However, it does not play a major role in the romance. There are elements reminiscent of parody and carnival in the *Prose Tristan*, which inspire laughter and familiarisation. This will be discussed mainly in relation to the character of Dinadan.

Our aim is to try and establish a reading of The *Prose Tristan* which takes into consideration its novelness without losing sight of its status as a thirteenth-century romance. Although Bakhtin incorporates his theory into the history of the novel, there is scope for viewing novelness as a tendency of writing, defining an ideology, which is not confined to the novel as he defined it.

Creative Understanding

A dialogic approach to a literary work entails recognising its alterity and conditions of production, but may also allow for readers bringing their own context to the work:

> If it is impossible to study literature apart from the epoch's entire culture, it is even more fatal to encapsulate a literary phenomenon in the single epoch of its creation, in its own contemporaneity , so to speak... we are afraid to remove ourselves in time from the phenomenon under investigation. Yet the art work extends its roots into the distant past. Great literary works are prepared for by centuries... Enclosure within the epoch also makes it impossible to understand the work's future life in subsequent centuries.[44]

According to Bakhtin then, great art grows over time and contains the potential to be

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[43] Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, p. 441.

[44] Bakhtin, 'Response to a Question from the Novyi Mir Editorial Staff' in *Speech Genres*, pp. 1-9 (pp. 3-4).

exploited outside its own epoch. Genres, organs of memory, accumulate ways of seeing and serve as external templates for the artist who awakens semantic possibilities lying within it. It is subsequent readers who can exploit the potential, and that is the role of literary scholarship and creative understanding.[45]

Despite his bias toward evolutionism, and his privileging of the novel as the supreme narrative genre of literature, Bakhtin's writings do give ample scope for applying his ideas to a Medieval romance. Without undermining his theory, there would seem to be a certain circularity in the notion of novelness applied to a linear evolutionary view of literary history. It can be understood as a tendency in writing exploited throughout literary history. It is this tendency towards novelness in the *Prose Tristan* which we aim to exploit, through what Bakhtin described as creative understanding. By examining the narrative technique we aim to show how there is a tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces, generic and anti-generic tendencies, manifested in the role of the narrator and the organisation of the narrative, including its use of language and of chronotope. We will assess to what extent we can identify heteroglossia, different languages and ideology, in the generic insertions, and whether the narrator incorporates these as polyphony, with different voices competing on an equal footing, or orchestrates them in a monologic fashion.

As was mentioned earlier, Bakhtin considered Medieval chivalric romance to be essentially a monologic genre, a view which we do not share. Before starting the closer study of the *Prose Tristan*, it will be worth considering, albeit briefly, examples of theoretical and critical approaches to romance, some of which are implicitly monologic, others dialogic. This will involve a cursory glance at some twelfth-century romance, including Chrétien de Troyes' romances, Béroul's and Thomas' *Tristan*, Jean Renart's *Guillaume de Dole*. The aim is to show that there is scope for novelness in the tradition which inspired the *Prose Tristan*, and that romance as a genre does indeed lend itself to a dialogic reading.

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[45] Bakhtin, 'Response to a Question', in *Speech Genres*, p. 5.

Romance

The discussion which follows does not offer an exhaustive analysis of romance, but aims to give a representative overview of some of the many ways in which it has been defined and assessed. The main focus of interest will be those aspects of twelfth-century romance which imply dialogism, especially in relation to the features of the *Prose Tristan* to be highlighted later. These aspects are the role of the narrator, the use of repetition and doubling, and the insertion of different discourses into one text.

One of the first uses of the term romance was to describe the vernacularisation of literature. The prologue to the *Prose Tristan* confirms this and sets the *Prose Tristan* within a specific cultural and linguistic tradition:

> Pour ce ke je voi que nus ne veut emprendre a translater de Latin en roumans l'estoire de Tristran ... je, Elys de Borron l'enprent a translater si com je sai ...[46]

In modern critical usage, and for the purpose of our discussion, 'Medieval romance' has come to represent a definite group of texts.[47] It would seem as though the first texts to be considered romances were the *romans antiques*, *Thèbes*, *Enéas*, and *Troie*, dating from 1150-60. They were inspired by the writers of antiquity such as Ovid and Virgil. Contemporary with these were chronicles in the vernacular, such as Wace's *Roman de Brut*, and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie* evoking the more recent history of Britain and France. The first examples of Arthurian romance appear not long afterwards.[48] We can also include the *Lais* of Marie de France and the verse redactions of the *Tristan* legend by Thomas and

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[46] TLF I, p. 19.

[47] The very word 'romance' can be ambiguous. It is most precise in the English language where it designates a specific type of literary text, whereas in French, for example, it is a vaguer term, *roman*, related to romance and the novel, implying variants and combinations of literary forms. Given the constraints of this study, our definition and history of romance is necessarily simplistic in nature. For more detailed treatment of the question see Douglas Kelly, *Medieval French Romance*, (New York: Twayne, 1993), pp. 101-137; he discusses the problems facing modern critics when attempting to define Medieval romance as a genre, given the anachronistic nature of genre theory when applied to the Middle Ages, and suggests a compromise seeking 'criteria for modern identification of medieval genres from historical evidence'. (p. 101). See also note 48.

[48] See Baumgartner, *Histoire de la littérature française: Moyen Age 1050 – 1486* (Paris: Bordas, 1988), pp. 95 ff; Jean Charles Payen and F. N. M. Diekstra, *Le Roman*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, fasc. 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), pp. 30 ff.; Paul Zumthor, *Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale*, Reprint of Paris edition 1954 (Genève: Slatkine, 1981), §289 pp. 149–150.

Marie de France and the verse redactions of the *Tristan* legend by Thomas and Béroul, all dating from the latter half of the twelfth century. The romance tradition shifted into prose in the thirteenth century, with continuations of the Arthurian material. Romances also continued to be composed in verse throughout the thirteenth century.

It is interesting to see how romance narratives drew on different traditions, and could combine them. The *romans antiques* are classical in their subject matter. Marie de France and Wace are linked to the Celtic Arthurian tradition. They are also linked, in some ways, to the *conteur* tradition along with Thomas' and Béroul's *Tristan*. It is Wace's *Brut* which is the first known text in French to deal with Arthurian material and to mention the Round Table, based on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. It recounts the history of the Kings of Britain from Brutus, a descendant of Aeneas, to the disappearance of Arthur in the seventh century. Chrétien de Troyes exploits this time and space of Arthur's reign to create a fictional universe, which becomes a true framework or labyrinth, allowing for considerable expansion and embellishment of the legend, with the development of chivalric adventures and love, 'mediated by sophisticated literary devices in a multifocal presentation'.[49] This embellishment of the tradition was continued by the early prose romances in the thirteenth century, which heralded the use of prose for fiction. Baumgartner emphasises the importance of the combination of oral tradition and literary technique when she defines *la mise en roman* as heralding the book:

> la mise en roman est d'abord une mise en mémoire (en remembrance) du passé dont les instruments sont l'écriture et, déjà sous son aspect matériel, le livre.[50]

Within this tradition there are a variety of techniques and styles, both monologic and dialogic in nature. Wace's *Brut* has a strong linear biographical aspect, which reflects a unified external ideology. Chrétien de Troyes added a certain complexity to this,

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[49] Tony Hunt, *Chrétien de Troyes: Yvain*, Critical Guides to French Texts, 55 (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986), p. 14.
[50] Baumgartner, *Histoire de la littérature*, p. 96.

and Béroul also adopted what could be called a multi-voiced approach, to the extent that some critics have questioned whether Béroul was really a single author. Sarah Kay has recently asked the same question about Chrétien de Troyes.[51] These developments in the twelfth century can be seen to break the monologism that Bakhtin saw in romance. The return to the chronicle-biographical tradition in the thirteenth century is potentially problematic for dialogism. Accompanied by the introduction of epic warfare elements lost to romance since the *romans antiques*, *Eneas* and *Troie*, the introduction of a new literary technique, *entrelacement*, in the *Lancelot-Graal* endowed the Arthurian legend with a certain unity through its well-ordered narration of the tale.[52] Perhaps dialogism is to be found in the relationship between the different parts of the *Vulgate Cycle* rather than in the narrative technique within each section. The *Prose Tristan*'s use of language would appear to be more dialogic than its predecessor's; its relationship to the *Lancelot-Graal* will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

The *Prose Tristan* is influenced by a combination of these strands of romance tradition. The subject matter combines the *Tristan* legend with Arthurian material. This was not to be totally unexpected as Béroul had already established the Arthurian context in his version of *Tristan*. The *Prose Tristan* continues the use of prose and, interpolating long sequences from the *Lancelot-Graal*, is obviously influenced by the latter. However, it posits a Latin source in its prologue. This would seem to imply returning to the importance both of a Latin tradition as well as a reforging of links with *historia* as expressed in prose chronicles.[53] As with many other romances it is a multi-faceted text, which explains why the genre has invited a variety of approaches.

Approaches to Romance

There are many different ways of approaching romance narratives, which reflects their complexity. Some approaches to these texts are thematic; others are more formal or historical in methodology. These various methods have resulted in differing

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[51] See Sarah Kay, 'Who was Chrétien de Troyes?', *Arthurian Literature*, 15 (1997), 1-35.
[52] *Entrelacement*, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.
[53] Baumgartner, *Histoire de la littérature*, p. 124 for a discussion of the chronicles.

interpretations of romance texts, with some critics interpreting romance as didactic in nature, and others reading it as more subversive.

Romance and didacticism

Rejecting taxonomic categories of genre, Northrop Frye, in his theory of modes of fiction, interpreted romance as being didactic. His method, however, does not do justice to Medieval literature in general. For example, in the course of defining his five modes, he distinguishes romance from epic according to its principal hero, as follows:

> ...
> 2) If superior in degree to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being.
>
> 3) If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader, of most epic and tragedy.
> ...[54]

An immediate objection to this categorising could be raised in relation to Roland, who would qualify as a romance hero rather than an epic hero in the *Chanson de Roland*. There are many flaws in Frye's theory of modes, which completely overlooks stylistic and formal elements of romance literature.

Frye also discussed romance more fully under his theory of myths. Having identified the essential element of romance plot as adventure and quest, he saw the central form of the romance as dialectical:

> everything is focused on a conflict between the hero and his enemy and all the readers' values are bound up with the hero.[55]

He also interpreted romance as analogous to ritual and dreams:

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[54] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 33–34.
[55] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 187.

> Translated into dream terms, the quest romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality... Translated into ritual terms the romance is the victory of fertility over the waste land.[56]

Therefore, Frye perceives romance as a didactic genre, a view also held by Frederick Jameson, who picks up on the dialectic of good against evil. Jameson sees romance as a product of the dominant ideology of the time, rather than as a questioning mode. Along with Frye, he saw Medieval romance within an evolutionary scheme leading to contemporary romance, where the same oppositions are played out under different guises, 'drawing the boundaries of a given social order and providing a powerful internal deterrent against deviancy or subversion'.[57] Jameson is a late Marxian theorist and his melding of Marxist politico-social doctrine with Freudian psycho-analysis produces a determinist reading of texts antipathetic to dialogism, as any flaws in the text reveal a determining subconscious re-imposing a monologic reading.

Both these readings of romance would seem to overlook the complexity of the narrative technique, and the ideological interpretation of romance texts is over-simplified accordingly.

Romance as *Modèle d'Ecriture*

In contrast, the importance of form and style was the main thesis of Paul Zumthor's *Essai de poétique médiévale*, in which he also strove to cope with the alterity of Medieval literature. However, he too arrived at the conclusion that romance was primarily didactic. His starting point was to be wary of any basic assumptions regarding literature which could be deceptive:

> Même si (comme on peut le penser) il existe un niveau où se définisse universellement et intemporellement toute poésie, les transformations du contexte culturel rendent cette définition presque illusoire, car elles

[56] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 193.
[57] Frederick Jameson, 'Magical Narrative: Romance as Genre', *New Literary History*, 7 (1975), 135–63.

affectent la fonction même des éléments en cause.[58]

Zumthor's poetics were derived from models of linguistic analysis and he described different literary entities which he called *modèles d'écriture*. He had different oppositional categories to distinguish between these entities. On a vertical axis the main one was *chant* vs *non chant;* the other two were *référence à l'énonciation seule* vs *référence à une action autre que l'énonciation,* and *discours personnel* vs *discours impersonnel.*[59]

These principal criteria were then recuperated by the following qualifiers on a horizontal axis: *distribution des classes lexicales, utilisation plus ou moins systématique des modalités grammaticales, distribution des types et des figures*. Zumthor admitted that these qualifiers could not account for everything. They formed a grid to cover the literary works, but the full virtuality of Medieval literature, as represented by the squares of this grid, was not realised – or has not survived.

Haidu criticises this linguistic approach to classifying literary works:

> The texts are studied in their materiality, but not in their particularity. It is not the literary text as radical entity that is of concern – indeed Zumthor specifically abjures the entire area of composition and individual form – but a supra-textual notion, partly descriptive, partly empirical, and partly deductive, called *modèles d'écriture*.[60]

Zumthor's study may have been synchronic, based on the forms of texts, but it also corresponded to a temporal evolution, as *non-chant* gradually replaced *chant*. According to Zumthor, romance, for example, is a *non chant* narrative and we enter the domain of the moderns where temporality comes into play with fiction:

> La fiction, jusqu'alors subordonnée aux exigences mélodiques et rythmiques, et partiellement déterminée par elles, devient l'un des deux

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[58] Paul Zumthor, *Essai de Poétique Médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 10-11.
[59] Zumthor, *Essai*, p. 188.
[60] Haidu, Peter, 'Making It (New) in the Middle Ages: Towards a Problematic of Alterity' *Diacritics*, 4 (1974), 2-11.

> plans d'existence du texte: l'autre est celui de << l'écriture >>. Simultanément, le récit figure un réel extérieur et se représente lui-même comme discours... la représentation temporelle éclate...; une tension s'établit entre le temps propre du récit et celui d'une parole qu'il assume fictivement.[61]

Within this temporality and linearity of the narrative there is potentially infinite expansion and unpredictability; the element of surprise is essential.

> ... la signification produite est surtout historique, impliquant une considération du temps, sa projection dans l'avenir ou le passé... l'action se développe parfois en arborescences contrastant avec la linéarité textuelle: l'imprévisibilité domine, la progression va de ce que l'on vient d'apprendre à ce qui est inattendu;[62]

It would seem here though that Zumthor was confusing several types of chronological exposition; what is future and what is unforeseen are quite different categories. Epic was also a linear narrative with action but Zumthor distinguished between *action collective chantée par l'épopée; aventure individuelle contée par le roman*, and emphasised how this difference was inherent in their forms:

> L'épopée se construit à partir d'agglomérations de formules, organisées successivement de manière à tracer un thème; le roman pose un thème qu'il développe comme s'il constituait une formule générative. D'où une différence de rythme sémantique et, pour ainsi dire, affectif: relative lenteur du récit épique, rapidité et mobilité générale du récit romanesque; pureté de lignes de l'épopée, à peu près dénuée d'<< effets de réel >>; ornementation du roman fourmillant de << détails vrais >>...[63]

In relation to Arthurian romance he saw the setting as contributing to the unity of the texts. In content the Arthurian material, which seems to be very much in the domain of fantasy for the modern reader, was, according to Zumthor, part of the historical

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[61] Zumthor, *Essai*, pp. 340 – 341. It should be pointed out that it is argued by John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), that verse romances may have been sung, and that non-musical presentation started with prose. Furthermore, we should not deduce that song is automatically incompatible with dialogue, eg. *sirventes* require an intertextual model; *tenso* and *partimen* combine two conflictual voices.

[62] Zumthor, *Essai*, p. 345.

[63] Zumthor, *Essai*, p. 346.

nature of romance, sharing in the status of Charlemagne and Alexander. It created unity for romances in general:

> Le type-cadre arthurien remplit ainsi trois fonctions:
> - Il fonde l'histoire, et fixe le sens propre de ce passé, *littera* et *sensus litteralis*, rendant possible une interprétation allégorique: *sensus moralis;*
> - il crée l'unité narrative, puisqu'il désigne de façon indubitable le lieu stable d'où tout provient et où tout, périodiquement, retournera: il permet d'organiser le devéloppement selon les types du voyage ou de la quête;
> - il constitue le cadre, non seulement d'un roman, mais virtuellement de tous les romans.[64]

Zumthor saw descriptions as being fundamental to the creation of meaning, without being realistic as such.[65] They had an individualising function. The often luxurious and evocative descriptions in romance were linked to what he saw as the latent didacticism of the genre. However, descriptions also create temporal stasis and this would seem to be at odds with the earlier assertion regarding the pace and rapidity of romance narrative.

Despite the expansion of Arthurian romance, the cast of characters remained relatively stable. Zumthor produced a structural model based on this and saw romance narrative as consisting of three major actants: the hero, his companions and opposing forces/enemies. The habitual framework for the action is a quest narrative, often eschatological in nature. Closure is not guaranteed by the resolution of the quest; the end of the romance is usually just the end of a particular stage in the actant/hero's destiny. Time continues beyond the narrative and leaves the way open for continuations and cyclical insertions or as Zumthor preferred to call them:

> ...totalisation historique, accumulatrice et récupératrice, opérée au niveau de l'anecdote productrice de sens, autant ou plus que celui d'une conception unitaire de l'ensemble.[66]

Endings suspended the action rather than concluding it, and the transition from verse

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[64] Zumthor, *Essai*, p. 350.
[65] Zumthor, *Essai*, pp. 352-354.
[66] Zumthor, *Essai*, pp. 357-358.

romance to prose romance favoured this expansion. The romance was freed from the limitations of verse and the desired effect was also one of increased authenticity and historicity when writing in prose.[67]

Zumthor's analysis was not as structural or linguistic as his approach to the *grand chant courtois*, for example. He took the whole narrative into account and the temporal context. Yet, he still subordinated this to linguistic elements, which he considered to be more precise. It is interesting to be able to refer to such models when considering the romance tradition. However, this method does tend to obscure the particularity of a given text. Above all, his appraisal of romance as didactic stems more from his idea of the 'virtual tradition' than from the study of individual texts. This is not conducive to perceiving dialogism in a text.

As Haidu points out, Zumthor subordinates plot and narration to their lexical covering, and yet, in romance narratives, words function with other elements. A purely linguistic analysis cannot do full justice to romance literature.[68] Like Frye and Jameson, Zumthor has also identified romance as primarily a didactic genre.

These thematic and linguistic approaches to romance are interesting, but give only a partial view of romance texts, which leads to an over-simplified interpretation of them. Approaches to romance which favour a closer look at the internal intricacies of the text, in conjunction with thematic and extratextual elements, offer a different perspective.

Narrative Technique

Eugène Vinaver concentrated on the complexity of romance and saw it, in contrast to epic with its emphasis on action and statements, as a questioning mode, rather than a didactic one. Although this mode was known in classical times, Vinaver pointed out that it had to be discovered anew in the twelfth century. The intellectual environment

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[67] Zumthor, *Essai*, p. 367.
[68] Haidu, 'Making it (New)', p. 10.

of the epoch contributed to this rediscovery. Both the exegetic tradition and the interpretative nature of romance reflected the teaching provided by the great cathedral schools of France in the twelfth century.[69] He further emphasised the importance of rhetoric and grammar at the time in influencing the treatment of literary material:

> Rhetoric could thus lead to a purposeful refashioning of traditional material, and the adapter could become to all intents and purposes an original author.[70]

This is an important consideration when reading Medieval romance, as the authors or producers of works would have received this kind of education.[71] Vinaver also considered the transmission of literature as being an important factor:

> It was the birth of a world in which the vernacular writings were to share with Latin texts the privilege of addressing the reader through the medium of visible, not audible symbols; through words intended to be read, not sung, or even recited; and with this went a radical alteration of the very nature of literary experience.[72]

Although there may be some truth in this statement, Vinaver perhaps underestimated the still predominantly oral and performative nature of romance in the Middle Ages. Manuscripts were commissioned by individuals to enrich their libraries for personal study, but there is also evidence that they continued to be performed, even the prose romances. For example, the Vienna 2542 ms of the *Prose Tristan* contains musical annotation for the lyric insertions, an indication of its potential for performance.[73] Literacy is an aspect of Medieval society for which we have little information and evidence, but we may assume that romance literature was more a collective experience than an individual one.[74] Furthermore, we have no proof of the vernacular

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[69] Eugène Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 18.
[70] Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance*, p. 22
[71] See Douglas Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose,* Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, Fasc. 59 (Louvain: Brepols Turnhout, 1991), pp. 110 ff, for a discussion of the influence of the arts of poetry and prose in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and what is known of their influence in classrooms of the time.
[72] Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance*, p. 4.
[73] *Les Lais du Roman de Tristan en Prose* ed. by Fotitch and Steiner.
[74] See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (London: Arnold, 1979), for further discussion of literacy.

being used as a vehicle for teaching reading, a role still fulfilled by Latin as far as we know.

Vinaver was also interested in the narrative techniques exploited in romance, such as internal monologues and interlinear commentary. He stated that nothing of this sort was to be found in European literature before the mid-twelfth century. He credited Chrétien de Troyes as being the first French writer to use these techniques.[75] Vinaver admired the complexity of twelfth-century romances, and the new tension which now existed between *conte* and *conjointure*, which required an interpretative attitude when reading them. This expression is coined in the prologue to *Erec et Enide*:

> Por ce dit Crestïens de Troies
> Que raisons est que totes voies
> Doit chascuns penser et entendre
> A bien dire et a bien aprendre,
> Et trait [d']un conte d'aventure
> Une mout bele conjunture
> Par qu'em puet prover et savoir
> Que cil ne fait mie savoir
> Qui sa scïence n'abandone
> Tant con Dex la grace l'en done.[76]

In this passage Chrétien is emphasising the importance of the narration of the romance, and stressing that meaning is given to the subject matter in hand by the art of the narrator. For the purposes of our discussion, if the narrator is too dominant, and the tone didactic, one cannot really talk of dialogism. However, in his romances Chrétien can be seen to problematise narration from within.

Chrétien's romance, *Yvain*, contains two prologues, and hence two narrators, an impersonal narrator:

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[75] Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance*, pp. 24–27.

[76] The prologue from *Erec et Enide*, lines 9-18, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans, suivis des Chansons avec, en appendice, Philomena*, ed. and trans. by O. Collet, J. M. Fritz, D. F. Hult, Ch. Méla, and M.-Cl. Zai (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994), p. 61.

Mais pour parler de chix qui furent
Laissons chix qui en vie durent,
Qu'encor vaut mix, che m'est a vis,
Un courtois mors c'uns vilains vis.
Pour che me plaist a reconter
Chose qui faiche a escouter
Du roy qui fu de tel tesmoing
C'on en parole pres et loing;[77]

and one of the characters, Calogrenant:

Et avec els Calogrenans,
Unz chevaliers mout avenans,
Qui lor ot commenchié .i. conte,
Non de s'onnor, mais de sa honte.[78]

There is also reference to Guinevere as a narrator of Calogrenant's adventures to the king:

Et la roÿne maintenant
Les nouveles Calogrenant
Li reconte tout mot a mot,
Que bien et bel conter li sot.[79]

This initial presentation of the romance's story would have been disconcerting for any audience.

> ...we have passed through the hands of three narrators, two of whom tell one story twice in its complete form and one of these also tells a fragmentary version of the same story... (the initial narrator) had started another one, which may or may not be continuing.[80]

Indeed, according to Peter Haidu the two prologues by the two narrators (referring to the inital impersonal narrator and to Calogrenant) raise more questions than they

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[77] *Yvain,* lines 29-36, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans,* p. 712.
[78] *Yvain*, lines 57-60, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans*, p. 713.
[79] *Yvain*, lines 654-658, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans*, p. 732.
[80] Philip Bennett, 'Difficult Structures and Problematic Endings in Chrétien de Troyes', paper read in the 1996-1997 seminar series in the Department of French, University of Edinburgh, unpublished.

answer and do not have any privileged status over the narrative itself.[81] They draw the reader into the narrative itself to explore the problems and issues raised, in this instance, the political issues of monarchy, the nobility and chivalry, examining 'conflicting claims of individualism with the necessities of social organisation', a problem central to romance since the earliest examples of the genre. Haidu cites the Tristan legend as an example.[82] Tony Hunt interprets Calogrenant's contribution as a subversion/inversion of the conventions of romance, which contributes to the ambiguity of the text:

> The chivalric image evoked by the introduction of Arthur's knights is also inverted by the unexpected discovery that Calogrenant is relating 'un conte, / non de s'enor, mes de sa honte' and by the uncourtly squabbling which is precipitated by the arrival of the queen...
>
> ...In common with Chrétien's actual audience, therefore, the fictional audience within the romance receives a number of surprises.[83]

Calogrenant's tale contains a number of reversals and examples of undermining of expectation, such as the inconclusive encounter with a young lady (lines 149-174), and a host who cannot recall when he last lodged a knight errant (lines 259-260). It provides the audience with an unfavourable impression of love and chivalry.[84]

Even the main tale, which is the story of Yvain himself, can be seen to undercut the topos of chivalry. As Hunt concludes:

> *Yvain* is, at least in part, an ironic study of courtly romance which examines two problems: the reception of courtly narrative and the relation of love and chivalry.[85].

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[81] Peter Haidu, 'Romance: Idealistic Genre or Historic Text?', in *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*, ed. by Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester, Michigan: Solaris, 1984), pp. 1-43.
[82] Haidu, 'Romance: Idealistic Genre?', p. 31.
[83] Tony Hunt, *Chrétien de Troyes: Yvain*, Critical Guides to French Texts, 55 (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986), p. 25.
[84] Hunt, *Yvain*, pp. 26-27.
[85] Hunt, *Yvain*, p. 34.

This brief glimpse of *Yvain* promises much scope for identifying dialogism in the text, as the questioning nature of the text's content is enhanced by the romance's problematising of narration from within.

Béroul's *Tristan* differs from Chrétien's romance in many ways, but would also seem to offer scope for dialogism. The narrative accommodates other voices in the text and demonstrates the importance of the representation of speech from narrator, characters and even the people of Cornwall, the intratextual public.[86]

Language is represented as potentially subversive:

> La caractéristique la plus évidente de la parole chez Béroul est en effet qu'il s'agit le plus souvent d'une parole mensongère, délibérément truquée. Discours et monologues ne sont pas ici comme dans les romans antiques ou, au XIIIe siècle, dans les romans en prose, l'occasion d'exposer ou de découvrir une vérité, d'expliciter les sentiments des personnages, mais de mettre en question l'évidence des choses.[87]

Two prime examples are to be found in the opening lines of the surviving fragment of the text, and during Iseut's ambiguous oath. In the opening episode, Iseut has spotted Marc spying on their rendez-vous, and adjusts her discourse accordingly, in order to deceive her husband:

> Mais Dex plevis ma loiauté,
> Qui sor mon cors mete flaele
> S'onques fors cil qui m'ot pucele
> Out m'amistié encor nul jor![88]

She uses a similar technique in the ambiguous oath episode:

> Qu'entre mes cuises n'entra home,
> Fors le ladre qui fist soi some,
> qui me porta oute les guez,
> Et li rois Marc mes esposez.[89]

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[86] See Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Tristan et Iseut: De la légende aux récits en vers* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987), p. 44.
[87] Baumgartner, *Tristan et Iseut*, pp. 44-45.
[88] Béroul, *Tristan*, lines 22-26, in *Tristan et Iseut*, ed. by Lacroix and Walter, p. 22.

Tristan colludes with Iseut in these episodes. Furthermore, there is a variety of tone in Béroul's text, for example between the potentially comic episode of the flour and blood scene, when the lovers are caught in *flagrant délit*, the grotesque nature of the lepers in the judgement scene, the harshness of exile in the Morois forest, which also hints at features of novelness in the text. Given the fragmentary state of the manuscript, it is difficult to be too conclusive on the nature of the narration of the text, but the surviving evidence indicates a certain degree of multi-voicedness, akin to novelness.

In contrast, it would seem that Thomas's version of the *Tristan* legend provides a different style of narration from Chrétien and again from Béroul. Despite the stylistic sophistication of the composition, it would seem to be more didactic and monologic in tone. The main feature of its monologic nature is the dominance of the narrator. He would seem to have simplified the tale for the sake of narrative coherence, and endows it with a unified courtly tone.[90] He is also prepared to invent episodes if they 'further the logic of his account'.[91] His epilogue typifies this didactic approach:

> E diz e vers i ai retrait:
> Pur essample issi ai fait
> Pur l'estorie embelir,
> Que as amanz deive plaisir,
> e que par lieus poissent troveir
> Choses u se puissent recorder:
> Aveir em poissent grant confort,
> Encuntre change, encuntre tort,
> Encuntre paine, encuntre dolur,
> Encuntre tuiz engins d'amur![92]

The complexity of Thomas' version lies more in the exploration of the themes and

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[89] Béroul, *Tristan*, lines 4205-4208, in *Tristan et Iseut*, ed. by Lacroix and Walter, p. 216.
[90] Baumgartner, *Tristan et Iseut*, p. 82.
[91] Geoffrey Bromiley, *Thomas' Tristan and the Folie Tristan d'Oxford*, Critical Guides to French Texts, 61 (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986), p. 33.
[92] Thomas, *Tristan*, Sneyd 2, lines 48-57, in *Tristan et Iseut*, ed. by Lacroix and Walter, p. 482.

motifs in the romance, such as the psychology of *fin' amors,* through extensive use of rhetoric. Also, the use of doubling with the main protagonists, Tristan with Tristan the Dwarf, Iseut of Cornwall with Iseut of Brittany, and their association with the death of the lovers, invites analysis beyond the letter of the text.[93]

Thomas' romance does contain questioning and explorative techniques, but tends more towards that of an external intellect questioning something, except, arguably, in the use of doubling. This external questioning is perhaps closer to Vinaver's view mentioned earlier, than the questioning from within which seems to occur in Chrétien's *Yvain*, for example. Our reading of the *Prose Tristan* will be more concerned with questioning which seems to arise from within the text itself, such as the problematising of narration. Another device which encourages this self-referential questioning is repetition.

Repetition

Intra-textual and inter-textual relationships are an important aspect of romance and of novelness. The choice and use of material can also contribute to dialogism in a text.

Chrétien de Troyes can be seen to use doubling within some of his romances, as well as using intertextual motifs. His *Chevalier de la Charrette* can be seen as modelling the adulterous couple of Lancelot and Guinevere on Tristan and Iseut. There is also much play on doubling within the text. The two main locations, Arthur's kingdom and Gorre are in opposition, as are Lancelot and Meleagant, there is a doubling of the quest theme in the simultaneous quests for the queen by Lancelot and Gauvain as well as the inter-textual references between the *Charrette* and *Yvain*, when reference is made to the quest for the abducted queen:

> Mais la roÿne en a menee
> Un chevalier, che me dist l'en,
> Dont li rois fist que hors du sen

[93] See Toril Moi, 'She Died Because She Came Too Late...: Knowledge, Doubles and Death in Thomas's *Tristan*', *Exemplaria*, 4 (1992), 105-133, for a Freudian reading of doubling in Thomas's *Tristan*. This example from Thomas will be discussed later in Chapter Four.

quant aprés li li envoia.[94]

In the *Chevalier de la Charrette* there is also a contrast in tone to be found between lyrical passages involving the lovers and comedy in episodes such as Lancelot falling from his horse while lost in reverie. The title of the romance itself plays on oppositions, given the honour attached to the status of knight, and the ignominy associated with climbing onto the cart.[95] The doubling of characters in the *Prose Tristan* will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Inter-textual allusions can also be a vehicle for comedy, even parody. Lucie Polak sees Chrétien's *Cligés* as recasting the Tristan story in a comic mode.[96] Many of the motifs of the Tristan legend are taken up, but used slightly differently; the story of the parents, the bride quest, the magic potion, the discovery of the lover, all have a slightly different emphasis from their use in *Tristan*. For example, in *Cligés* the magic love potion serves to deceive the husband, Alis, who takes on a role similar to that of the fooled husband in the *fabliaux*. Cligés and Fénice's relationship is eventually legitimised in wedlock. Given the emphasis on marriage, rather than on adultery, many have seen *Cligés* as a Chrétien moralising. Yet, as Polak points out, the comic, ironic element of *Cligés* does not preclude a coherent moral message.[97] It can be seen in fact as a hybrid text:

> But Cligés is no 'roman à thèse' and if a moral point is made by Chrétien, it is done so ironically and with a light touch. This comic romance is a hybrid, offering a many-sided entertainment as well as stimulating the moral awareness of the courtly listeners.[98]

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[94] *Yvain*, lines 3702-3705, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans*, p. 833. Further intertextual references are made in *Yvain*, lines 3914 ff and 4734 ff.
[95] See *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: Le Moyen Age*, ouvrage préparé par Robert Bossuat, Louis Pichard et Guy Raynaud de Lage, édition entièrement revue et mise à jour sous la direction de Geneviève Hasenohr et Michel Zink (Paris: Fayard, 1992), p. 274.
[96] Lucie Polak, *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligés*, Critical Guides to French Texts, 23 (London: Grant and Cutler Ltd., 1982), p. 50.
[97] Polak, *Cligés*, p. 51.
[98] Polak, *Cligés*, p. 92.

These are only a few examples taken from the twelfth-century verse romances, but they would seem to show potential for being interpreted as the demonstrating the essence of novelness, dialogism. The use of repetition was also fundamental to the prose romances of the thirteenth century.

Repetition in the Prose Romances

E. Jane Burns and Douglas Kelly have both written about the importance of repetition in prose romance.[99]

Kelly uses Vinaver's thoughts as a starting point for his own ideas on the transition from *conjointure* in the verse romance tradition to diversity in the prose romance tradition. He goes as far as to label this diversity *disjointure*, which is the addition of new material to a story, creating new links not present at the outset. This is what allows the expansion of the Arthurian material in the thirteenth-century tradition.

Vinaver saw this transition and expansion of romance as being linked to the encyclopaedic nature of the thirteenth century. The aim was to clarify and elucidate stories, to provide links where before episodes were independent, and to suggest new relationships between themes.[100] The main narrative technique for achieving this expansion and linking in was *entrelacement*. The use made of this technique made by the *Prose Tristan* will be looked at in the next chapter.

Like Vinaver, Kelly sees this as typical of the encyclopaedic nature of the intellectual movements of the thirteenth century. Also, he does not see the change-over as coming about all at once. It is prepared by the verse romance tradition:

> Ce nouvel art ne s'impose d'un seul coup, ni ne s'en tient au seul roman en prose du XIII[e] siècle. Il se décèle même dans les premiers romans en vers... La *Charette* elle-même est épisodique et l'*Yvain* en dépit de son épilogue, n'hésite pas à faire allusion à la quête pour Guenièvre en Gorre

[99] Douglas Kelly, 'L'Invention dans les romans en prose', in *The Craft of Fiction*, ed. by Arrathoon, pp. 119 – 135; E. Jane Burns, *Arthurian Fictions: Rereading the Vulgate Cycle* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1985).

[100] Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance*, p. 68.

> afin d'expliquer l'absence de Gauvain en Logres – allusion qui fait penser aux renvois de la *Post-Vulgate*, au *Lancelot en Prose*.[101]

As was mentioned earlier, there is extensive use of intertextuality within the romance tradition, both themes and structure; the *Prose Tristan* novelness was prepared for by its antecedents.

E. Jane Burns is more theoretical in her appraisal of prose romance, and insists on the need to change our reading habits. Romance is often seen as the forerunner of the modern novel because of its linearity, but as she points out:

> By rereading we can examine the ways in which the *récit* of the vulgate cycle is systematically displaced from a straightforward narrative path, exploring how this text constantly shifts our attention away from the narrative at hand to other portions of the tale. Here logical sequence is consistently undermined by many different kinds of repetition.[102]

She sees the repetition and self-referentiality of the prose romances as playing out the rivalry between different concepts of textuality, scripture and rhetoric. The divine text copies sacred truth, whereas the literary texts invent their own. In Neo-platonic thought repetition is an act of representation in the chain of being. Through this vertical repetition the Divine Being is made manifest. The horizontal repetition of the prose romances generates a seemingly infinite number of narrative elements, all grounded in self-reference.[103] Repetition is an important aspect of the narrative technique of our text, and, as is suggested by Burns in relation to the *Lancelot-Graal,* is a vehicle for subversion of received ideology. Burns' arguments are influenced by Peter Haidu's work, where he concentrates specifically on repetition in Medieval literature and its ideological consequences.[104] For Haidu, the logical consequence of the self-referentiality of literary language is that all literature is inherently parodic, and it challenges the received wisdom of its time. Repetition, involving echoes and

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[101] Kelly, 'L'Invention', p. 126.
[102] Burns, *Arthurian Fictions*, p. 1.
[103] Burns, *Arthurian Fictions*, p. 3.
[104] Peter Haidu, 'Repetition: Modern Reflections on Medieval Aesthetics', in *Modern Language Notes*, 5 (1977), 875 – 887.

parallels, is an important part of the *Prose Tristan*. Repetition creates the potential for satire in the text and double-voiced discourse. The romance tradition which precedes the *Prose Tristan* provides a dialogising background, and the text hybridises various aspects of that tradition. Without being clear-cut parody the text can be seen to comment on earlier texts, in much the same way as *Cligés* can be seen to comment on the *Tristan* legend. The *Prose Tristan* can be seen to comment on its tradition, both twelfth-century romance and the *Lancelot-Graal*, and the use of repetition creates the potential for irony or even satire. Whether or not this is the case for the *Prose Tristan* will be discussed in the course of the following chapters.

Burns' and Haidu's thoughts lead to questioning the role of the author, authority, interpretation and meaning. We will be looking at how the *Prose Tristan* adopts the narrative technique of the *Lancelot-Graal* and the conflict of the narrating voices of *li contes* and the narrator's *je*, along with the implications this has for interpreting the romance in Chapter Three.

Romance and Lyricism

Romance has often been compared unfavourably to epic and lyric. For W. P. Ker, writing at the end of the last century, romance could be included within the epic scheme. He viewed romance as being inferior to epic in certain ways:

> Romance by itself is a kind of literature that does not allow the full exercise of dramatic imagination; a limited and abstract form as compared with the fullness and variety of Epic; though episodes of romance, and romantic moods and digressions may have their place along with all other human things, in the epic scheme.[105]

Romance's particularity was also undermined by his view that it was akin to lyricism:

> The romances represent in a narrative form the ideas and the spirit which took shape as lyric poetry in the South... directly dependent... for their principal motives... namely the idealist or courteous science of love.[106]

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[105] W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* (London: Macmillan,1897), p. 37.
[106] Ker, *Epic and Romance*, p. 394.

This view has since been often discredited by critics. It has been shown that romance is fundamentally different from lyric, not only in form but in ideology. The idealised sentiment of love is placed into a social context, and the problems arising therefrom are explored:

> Lyric may represent love as a celebration, but romance necessarily focuses on contradictory and antagonistic images of love and desire, self and other. More specifically, the expansiveness of romance permits a conjoining of languages which yields a very different image of discourse from that available to lyric. ... romance ironises love; that is, it subjects love to interpretations other than those flattering constructions placed on it by the bemused lover in his solitary lyric reverie. It opens love up to the intrusion of other viewpoints while still focusing on the central perspective.[107]

This observation makes a point central to dialogism in romance, emphasising its scope for containing different languages and points of view. Romance is more than purely a *mise en récit* of lyric themes. The very way the themes are organised and presented transforms their significance and meaning.

Ker does not comment on epic and lyric, but it is worth noting that, in terms of poetics, epic is generally considered closer to lyric than romance. Rupert Pickens describes what he calls a process of *verticalisation* which can imbue epic narrative with lyric tendencies. He considers the mixing of mimetic passages, diegetic passages and commentary, which are all combined in the *Couronnement de Louis*.

> Par le néologisme *verticalisation* j'entends le processus qui dévalorise le narratif en impliquant une insinuation du lyrique et l'imposition de la présence.[108]

This can be taken a step further to reassess the broader impact of these moments of presence on the whole poem:

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[107] Stephen G. Nichols, 'Amorous Imitation: Bakhtin, Augustine and *Le Roman d'Eneas*', in *Romance: Generic Transformation,* ed. by Brownlee and Brownlee, pp. 47-73 (p. 48).
[108] Rupert Pickens, 'Art épique et verticalisation', *Vox Romanica*, 45 (1986), 116–149 (p. 118).

> ... the carefully planned external repetitions...transfer verticality onto a broader textual plane affecting the poem as whole rather than individual elements of the poem.[109]

However, according to Lonigan, the lyrical passages must be treated with the same reservations that can be applied to lyrical tendencies in romance narrative.[110] This is a whole area of debate in itself and beyond the scope of our current discussion. It is nevertheless another indication of the complexity of narratives and discourses at the time of Medieval romance. It also helps to highlight an area of the *Prose Tristan* that will be central to our reading of it, that is, the mixing of discourse within the text, namely lyric and narrative. This is a feature which was already present in another, earlier, thirteenth-century romance, Jean Renart's *Guillaume de Dole*. In the prologue Renart describes this technique as follows:

> Car aussi com l'en met la graine
> es dras por avoir los et pris,
> einsi a il chans et sons mis
> en cestui *Romans de la Rose*
> qui est une novele chose
> et s'est des autres si divers
> et brodez, par lieus, de biaus vers
> que vilains nel porroit savoir.[111]

These insertions punctuate the narrative and comment on it. They are not composed by the characters of the romance, but are quoted from an extratextual repertoire that would have been known to the audience of the time. The songs are taken from various lyric traditions, such as *chansons de toile*, *chansons courtoises* (*trouvères* or *troubadours*), *chansons à danser*. Maureen Boulton studies these insertions in her

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[109] Philip Bennett, 'Poetic Structures in the *Couronnement de Louis*' in *Littera et Sensus: Essays on Form and Meaning in Medieval French Literature, Presented to John Fox*, ed. by D. A. Trotter (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), pp. 17–30, (p. 28).

[110] Paul R. Lonigan, *The Gormont et Isembart: Problems and Interpretation of an Old French Epic* (New York: University Microfilms International, 1976), p. 46.

[111] Jean Renart, *Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, ed. by F. Lecoy, CFMA 91 (Paris: Champion, 1962), lines 8-15.

work, *The Song in the Story*.[112] She sees the inserted lyrics as substitutes for interior monologues, although they do not straightforwardly express the emotions of the character:

> The songs mark, signal or denote Conrad's feelings, rather than expressing them. In general... the distance between the hero and the songs he borrows is exploited to ironic effect, as Jean Renart portrays him striving (and failing) to live up to the ideal he sings. He thus sets the songs in a "dialogical" relationship with the narrative.[113]

In this instance, what Boulton calls the "dialogical relationship" is due to the re-contextualising of the lyric, and its significance lies in how this affects the surrounding narrative. However, it is not clear from her argument whether the relationship works both ways. It should follow that the narrative also ironises the lyric. However, what we have here is rather, as Anne Berthelot claims, a superficial link between narrative and lyric, and not one which fundamentally affects the status of either mode of discourse:

> Mais les pièces lyriques qui parsèment la trame du roman sont pour la plupart (peut-être même pour la totalité) empruntées à l'oeuvre de poètes antérieurs; ce ne sont jamais que des citations, expressément désignées comme telles par le narrateur, et par le personnage lui-même.[114]

Berthelot, writing with the *Prose Tristan* in mind, describes the prose romance as being sufficiently vast to be able to accommodate lyric within its narrative framework. The relationship between narrative and lyric discourse is more subtly explored by attributing composition and performance to the characters themselves. This aspect of composition in the *Prose Tristan* will be studied in Chapter Five, where we will aim to assess how the different types of discourse, heteroglossia, interact with each other.

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[112] Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *The Song in the Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction 1200-1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 26-35.
[113] Boulton, *The Song in the Story*, p. 35.
[114] Anne Berthelot, 'Lyrisme et narrativité dans le *Tristan en Prose*', in *Tristan-Studien*, ed. by Buschinger and Spiewok (Greifswald: Reineke, 1993), pp. 7–14 (p. 9).

Conclusion

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, Bakhtin's ideas about novelness provide a fruitful framework for looking at romance. Romance is inherently dialogic and lends itself to an approach such as the one we are applying to the *Prose Tristan*. The problematising of narration, the use of repetition intra-textually and through inter-textual echoing, even the insertion of another genre, are all devices emerging in twelfth-century romance. These features enable us to place romance texts firmly in the sphere of what Bakhtin calls the second stylistic line, even if it is not a perfect fit. We will aim to show how, as a thirteenth-century romance interacting with a tradition which is already novelistic to a certain degree, the *Prose Tristan* exploits dialogism to an even greater extent, with the expansion and reforging of links characteristic of prose romance. If nothing else, the conditions are favourable.

Chapter Three

Narrative Technique

Introduction

The manuscript tradition of the *Prose Tristan* was presented in Chapter One, helping to clarify the context of the printed edition which we are using for our study. This was followed in Chapter Two by a discussion of Bakhtin's theory of novelistic discourse, and a brief overview of the wider romance tradition, with which the *Prose Tristan* is identified.

In this chapter we will begin examining the narrative technique of the *Prose Tristan* more closely. The length and complexity of the work is such that we are unable to cover the entire romance in great detail. We shall consider the text's outline, and, in a brief synopsis, draw attention to key structuring elements which will be considered subsequently when examining the narrative technique. The main areas of interest are the role of the narratorial voice, which intervenes frequently during the narrative, and the chronological organisation of the text. The tradition to which the *Prose Tristan* is being compared is that of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle. This tradition fits the wide perception of unified medieval christological discourse. Our aim is to assess how the *Prose Tristan* enters into a dialogic relationship with it, and to what extent it may be seen to refuse that mode, thereby anticipating a more modern novelistic discourse, both in form and ideology.

Plot Synopsis

The encyclopedic, yet fragmented, nature of the *Prose Tristan* does not make it an easy romance to summarise, nor is it easy to handle the vast bulk of its material. It encompasses within its narrative the chronology of the *Lancelot-Graal*. The story begins at the time of Joseph of Arimathea and the origins of the Holy Grail, and concludes with the commencement of the *Mort Artu*. It will be useful at this stage to give as brief as possible an account of the plot, as in the vulgate of the romance,

discussed in Chapter One. Framed by a prologue and an epilogue or *explicit*, depending on the manuscript, the romance can be neatly divided into three parts.[1]

In the prologue the posited author sets out the aim of the romance, which is to tell the story of Tristan and how he ranked alongside Lancelot and Galahad as the greatest of knights. No mention is made in this prologue of his relationship with Iseut. From the outset, there is a clear indication that this chivalric romance will bring the Tristan and Arthurian legends closer together:

> Incipit: Chi conmence li estoires de Tristran que on apele le Bret, ke mesire Elys de Borron et mesire Luces du Gant firent. Pour ce ke je voi que nus ne veut emprendre a translater de latin en roumans l'estoire de Tristran, ki fu li mieudres chevaliers ki onques fust en la Grande Bretaingne devant le roi Artu ne aprés, fors Galehaut, ki fu fiex Lanselot du lac, je Elys de Borron, l'enprent a translater si com je sai et voel conmenchier en tel maniere
>
> Explicit: Icy faut l'estoire de monseigneur Tristran et del Saint Graal si parfaicte que nul ne savroit que y mectre. Amen.[2]

Part I of the Romance

The first part relates Tristan's ancestry and childhood. It then traces the early stages of his chivalric career, including the drinking of the love potion with Iseut, up to the point where he is exiled from Cornwall and embarks upon the life of a knight errant in Logres.[3]

The action begins with the story of Tristan's ancestry. Sador, Joseph of Arimathea's nephew, turns down an arranged marriage, later falling in love with and marrying

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[1] Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 273. Baumgartner points out this three way division of the romance in her analysis of the text's narrative structure.

[2] TLF I, p. 19. From the manuscript Vienna 2542. There would appear to be some confusion between Galehot and Galahad in this manuscript. 'Galehaut' is Lancelot's companion, 'li sires des lointaines isles'. Galahad's name is more commonly spelt 'Galaad' in Old French.

[3] What we have called the first part of the romance is found in the following volumes of the printed edition: Curtis I-III and TLF I. A summary of the action can be found in Löseth, *Analyse*, §§ 1-104. The status of these editions in relation to the manuscript tradition, versions, and Löseth was discussed in Chapter one.

Chélinde, a princess from Babylon. The details of their subsequent trials and tribulations prefigure events which will befall their distant descendant Tristan and his lover Iseut. They are separated against their will on several occasions and Chélinde is forced to live with a series of men whom she does not love. She secretly bears a son by Sador, Apollo l'Aventureus, and later by the Cornish king, Canor, she bears a second son, Cicoriades. Apollo will eventually become King of Léon and Cicoriades King of Cornwall. It is during Canor's reign of Cornwall that the costly annual tribute Cornwall pays to Ireland is established, when he gains help from the King of Ireland to defend his realm from the advances of King Pélias of Léon. The tribute will be paid each year until Tristan arrives at Marc's court, several generations later, and defeats the Irish champion, Morholt.

The era of Canor's reign is an agitated and war-ridden one, and rivalry over Chélinde persists for years between himself and Sador. One day, whilst worship is taking place at Venus' shrine, Canor attacks Sador in jealous rage. Defending himself, Sador mistakenly retaliates against Apollo, who was wearing the same coat of arms as Canor, taking him for his mortal enemy. Apollo unknowingly slays his own father in self-defence and then proceeds to choose Chélinde as his wife, thereby marrying his mother.[4]

During his mission to evangelise and convert Britain, Saint Augustine arrives. He reveals their incest to the royal couple. Chélinde, not believing him, orders him to be burnt, but she herself is struck down by lightning as a punishment. Chélinde and Sador, ill-fated lovers and ancestors of Tristan, both meet an unfortunate and unhappy end. Saint Augustine converts Apollo and his people to Christianity.

Apollo then marries Gloriande and Cicoriades marries Joene, the two daughters of the King of Ireland. Gloriande and Apollo's son, Candace, becomes King of Léon and Cornwall. On his death his eldest son inherits Cornwall, the youngest Léon.

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[4] For a discussion of the motif of the Oedipus myth see Joël Grisward, 'Un schéma narratif du *Tristan en Prose*: le mythe d'Oedipe', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Pierre Le Gentil par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis* (Paris: SEDES, 1973), pp. 329-339.

Several generations later Felix is King of Cornwall and his son and heir is Marc. Marc's sister Helyabel marries Méliadus, King of Léon. They are the future parents of Tristan.

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Tristan, as related in the *Prose Tristan*, do not bear much resemblance to the version of events related in the verse redaction of the legend.[5] In the *Prose Tristan* Méliadus is trapped under a fairy's spell and Helyabel, who is heavily pregnant, goes in search of him with a young woman. She meets Merlin in the forest who tells her that she will never see her husband again. At that point she gives birth to their son, and dying of a broken heart names him Tristan. The young prince is entrusted to the care of Gouvernal, on Merlin's orders. His father is still alive and eventually freed from his enchantment.

Meanwhile, Marc of Cornwall continues with the payment of the annual tribute to Ireland, and gives the audience evidence of his treachery when he murders his own brother, who had accused him of cowardice in this matter.

Tristan's early years are traumatic following his father's remarriage. He survives murder attempts in Brittany and Gaul. Gouvernal eventually decides to take the boy to his Uncle Marc's court in Cornwall, where he thrives during his apprenticeship as a knight, also excelling in the skills of music and chess playing. His military prowess and courage will come to light in his victory over the Irish champion, Morholt, who arrives to claim the annual tribute payable by Cornwall to Ireland. Tristan approaches Marc and asks to be knighted, in order to be eligible to challenge Morholt to abolish the tribute. He triumphs and wounds Morholt fatally. He himself is also wounded and is forced to leave Cornwall in search of healing. Sailing as far as Ireland, he is healed by the Princess Iseut, who does not realise that he is the one who had defeated Morholt, her uncle. The motif of healing will recur later in the story, in relation to Tristan and other characters, and is a motif known from the verse redaction of the

[5] See *Tristan et Iseut,* ed. by Lacroix and Walter, for variations on Tristan's ancestry as represented in the Old French verse versions and the Norse version of the legend.

legend. It will be discussed in Chapter Four as a recurring motif.

While he is in Ireland, a young Saracen knight is also there, Palamedés, who falls in love with the young Iseut instantly. Tristan is a spectator at the Tournament of the *Lande* where the young Saracen impresses all present. Palamedés only has eyes for Iseut, and as a result of this Tristan notices the young princess's beauty also and decides to compete with Palamedés to merit her affection.[6] Their rivalry is born at this moment and will last the whole romance. Tristan will develop rivalries with other male characters later, and these will be discussed under doubling of characters. The importance of tournaments throughout the romance will be discussed as a recurring motif in Chapter Four.

Not long afterwards, Tristan's true identity, as the slayer of Morholt, is discovered and he narrowly escapes death. He is banished from Ireland. His return to Cornwall is triumphant and his popularity provokes the jealousy of Marc. It is here that the rivalry between king and nephew emerges. It will grow ever more fierce as the romance progresses. The rivalry crystallises following the episode of their affair with the wife of Seguaradés, in which uncle and nephew compete for the affections of the same woman. This is a replication of the initial situation in which Tristan and Palamedés compete for Iseut. It also prefigures the subsequent situation where Tristan and Marc will be in competition for Iseut.

In a fore-warning of what is to come, Tristan gains the upper hand and Marc is determined to get revenge. He does so by sending Tristan to Ireland to ask for Iseut's hand in marriage on his behalf, knowing full well that Tristan had been banished from there for killing Morholt. To return to Ireland would be putting his life in danger. Tristan extricates himself from this danger *en route*, fortuitously, by defending the King of Ireland at Arthur's court, defeating Blanor, Arthur's champion. As a reward,

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[6] This is a good illustration of René Girard's theory of displaced desire, in which the objects of love may be female, and the subjects are typically male. Lover and rival are bound together by homosocial desire, and the woman is absent from the picture. The male bond takes priority over the female. See René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Grasset, 1961).

he asks for the hand of Iseut for his uncle. It is worth noting here the replacement of the dragon-slaying episode, which indicates the enhancement of the purely chivalric outlook of the *Prose Tristan*.

The King of Ireland agrees to the marriage, despite a dream warning him of the dire consequences of this act, and allows Tristan to take Iseut to Cornwall to wed Marc. As in the verse redaction of the legend, Iseut's mother prepares a love potion for Marc and Iseut to drink on their wedding night, a magic potion which would bind them together in love for the rest of their lives. During the voyage to Cornwall, Tristan and Iseut are mistakenly served the potion by Brangain and Gouvernal, their attendants, and the life-long flame of passion is ignited.

At this point the prose version departs even more radically from the verse tradition. The boat is caught in a storm and washed up on the isle of *Château des Pleurs*. The lovers and their entourage are held prisoners and stay for three months, forced into perpetuating a local evil custom. They eventually extricate themselves and arrive at the Cornish court, where Marc and Iseut are married. Tristan and Iseut's affair is now adulterous. After more than a year at court, Audret, Marc's other nephew, is convinced of Tristan and Iseut's adultery and denounces them. Tristan and Iseut manage to get out of trouble this time and flee to spend time alone in the Morois Forest. Marc discovers their hiding place and brings Iseut back to Cornwall. This is an important variation from Béroul's romance where Iseut returns to court of her own free will.[7]

Tristan, meanwhile, is injured by a poisoned arrow and departs for Brittany to be healed by Iseut of the White Hands, whom he later marries. The marriage is never consummated and, unable to forget Iseut of Cornwall, Tristan persuades Kaherdin, his brother-in-law, to accompany him to Cornwall to see her again.

Interpolated at this stage are a series of chivalric adventures featuring Lamorat and

[7] See *Tristan et Iseut*, ed. by Lacroix and Walter, p. 153.

Lancelot. The tale of *Le vallet a la cote mal tailliee* and his adventures with the *demoiselle mesdisant* are the most memorable of these additions.[8] After this interlude of several pages, the narrative returns to Tristan.

Having received a letter from Iseut of Cornwall, Tristan sets off with Kaherdin. There is relatively frequent interpolation of other genres within the prose romance, and the epistolary genre is one of them, both verse and prose. This will be discussed under variety of discourse in Chapter Five. Tristan and Kaherdin's journey is interrupted by a storm, which lands them on the coast of Arthur's kingdom. Arthur is being held captive by a fairy and Tristan liberates him. Finally arriving in Cornwall, Tristan manages to see Iseut again. Unfortunately, Kaherdin also falls in love with Iseut and the ensuing misunderstanding leads to Tristan's *folie* and Kaherdin's death. Death, madness and misery in love are all recurring motifs which will be considered in Chapters Four and Five. After a sojourn in the Morois, wandering in his madness, during which he kills a giant and lives with some shepherds, Tristan is found and brought back to court. Marc allows him to stay until healed by Iseut. This is the second occasion on which Iseut saves his life through her healing powers. Once he has regained strength and sanity, he is banished from Cornwall. Tristan decides to go to the kingdom of Logres, with the ambition of one day being presented at Arthur's court. His farewell to Cornwall is full of reproaches for the harsh treatment and ingratitude shown by the king, and certain courtiers, despite all he had done for them in the past.

This concludes the first part of the romance.

Little of the first part of the prose romance resembles the tradition established by the verse redactions of the *Tristan* legend. There are surviving elements of the earlier, known story, but they are scattered among new, chivalric adventures. They are

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[8] See Curtis, 'A Romance within a Romance: The Place of the *Roman du Vallet a la Cote Maltailliee* in the *Prose Tristan*', in *Studies in Medieval French Language and Literature Presented to Brian Woledge in Honour of His Eightieth Birthday,* ed. by Sally Burch North, with a preface by M. A. Screech, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 180 (Genève: Droz, 1988), pp. 17–35, for a discussion of this interpolation.

indeed swamped by these elements which would appear to be of greater importance to the structure of the prose romance, such as the rivalries between Tristan and Marc, Tristan and Palamedés, and recurring motifs like tournaments. Significantly, Tristan is saved from the wrath of the King of Ireland by a favour done for him at Arthur's court, on his way back to claim Iseut for Marc. These themes, along with the issues raised in the stories of Tristan's ancestors, are of more importance to the reading of the romance than constant comparison with the verse redaction of the tradition.

Even the manner in which the lovers fall in love is quite different. The potion seems secondary to a mutual attraction, and Tristan is portrayed as having been involved with another woman prior to loving Iseut.[9]

The story of Tristan's ancestry and lineage is an innovation of the prose version of the romance. Again, these episodes serve to prefigure some of the motifs and themes which will recur in the main body of the romance, most notably misfortune and adversity in love.[10] This displays a clear intention on the part of the narrator to invite comparison and contrast with the earlier prose romances such as the *Lancelot-Graal*, which go back to the time of Joseph of Arimathea and the origins of the legend of the Holy Grail, uniting chivalry and the early Christian church.

However, Colette Van Coolput argues that the *Prose Tristan* subverts this unifying function found in the *Lancelot-Graal*. The *Prose Tristan* underlines the disunity between religion and chivalry and the fragmentation of themes rather than unification:

> ...chevalerie et religion, histoire d'un lignage et histoire du christianisme, prédestination et aventure du Graal, passé, présent, avenir. Tous ces thèmes s'unifient en une immense Histoire fondamentalement intelligible, qui voit la réalisation des desseins de Dieu.
>
> Or dans le *Tristan en prose* on semble assister à une 'déconstruction'

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[9] Maureen Fries, 'The Impotent Potion: On the Minimization of the Love Theme in the *Tristan en Prose* and Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations*, 1 (1991), 75-81.

[10] See Janina Traxler, 'Observations on the Importance of the Prehistory in the *Tristan en Prose*', *Romania*, 108 (1987), 539-548, for further discussion of this.

> sournoise... La structure temporelle se désagrège, s'émiette en une succession de moments autonomes. A cette 'déconstruction' diachronique correspond du point de vue synchronique, une disjonction entre la religion et la chevalerie. Les divers thèmes du roman connaissent chacun un développement indépendant. Tout se passe comme si, à travers le *Tristan en prose*, l'édifice du *Lancelot-Graal* s'était mis à se fissurer.[11]

We shall return to this argument in due course.

Part II of the Romance

The second part of the *Prose Tristan* covers Tristan's career in Logres up until his return to Cornwall and subsequent imprisonment by Marc. Following this imprisonment, at the hands of his uncle, he escapes and returns to Logres, this time taking Iseut with him.[12] The chivalric episodes interlace with some events from the *Lancelot-Graal*, but most of the material here is created by the author of the *Prose Tristan*.

On leaving Cornwall, Tristan gains a new companion, a young knight called Dinadan, who had travelled to Marc's kingdom to seek out the already illustrious Tristan. He travels to Logres with our eponymous hero. Dinadan will become a key figure in the romance. His relationship with Tristan contributes much to the construction of the main hero. Dinadan is also a significant protagonist when it comes to questions of ideology within the romance, frequently questioning customs and laws by which the chivalric fraternity blindly abides. Tristan announces to him, on arriving in Logres, that he does not intend to present himself at Arthur's court until he has performed exploits worthy of the Round Table. It is not long before Dinadan is terrified of Tristan's fearlessness and determination to overcome the tarnished reputation of Cornish knights. Much to his dismay they even take on thirty knights, who have been instructed by Morgain to ambush Lancelot. By now, the main topic of knightly conversation in Logres is the achievements of this unknown knight. Suspecting his

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[11] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 38.

[12] The second part of the romance is found in TLF II, III and IV; a synopsis is provided by Löseth, *Analyse*, §§105-281.

true identity to be Tristan, Lancelot and companions set off in search of him but to no avail. The motif of the quest for one knight by a group of others was well known from the quest for Perceval in Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal* and the frequent quests for Lancelot in the *Prose Lancelot.*

Meanwhile, back in Cornwall, Iseut worries, not having received news of Tristan, and sends off a young messenger also to seek him out. Messengers, knights of the Round Table and Tristan all finally meet at the tournament of the *Château des Pucelles*. It is also an occasion which brings Tristan and Palamedés face to face. Tristan manages to overshadow his Saracen rival, who despairs of ever being able to triumph over Tristan. Tristan is the champion of the tournament, but, unwittingly wounded by Lancelot, he leaves the scene before revealing his identity. Following his departure, Tristan's identity is revealed; so Lancelot, together with nine fellow knights of the Round Table, promises to seek him out. Gaheriet, Yvain and Kay seek him in vain at Marc's court in Cornwall, where, in a comic sequence of events, they are forced to deal with Marc's dishonesty and cowardice at the *Lac Aventureux*.

Meanwhile, Tristan having slain the sons of Daras in the tournament, is languishing in their father's prison with Dinadan and Palamedés. He is eventually released from Daras' prison, only to fall into the hands of Morgain the Fay at her castle. To gain revenge on Lancelot and Guinevere, she uses the custom of the *don contraignant* to oblige Tristan to sport a shield, which is decorated with the provocative image of a knight with a king and queen under his feet, at the forthcoming tournament of the *Roche Dure*. As it is a *don contraignant* Tristan has no option under the chivalric code but to accept. He has, despite this favour, incurred the wrath of Morgain by killing her *ami* during a joust. Morgain prophesies that he will die from the same lance that killed her lover. The prophesy will be fulfilled at the end of the romance, as it is with this very lance that Marc kills Tristan. This is one of many forebodings and prophesies which figure in the romance. Tristan again dominates the field at the tournament of the *Roche Dure* but departs incognito abandoning the compromising shield. Morgain can be seen to double, to a certain extent, with Iseut of the White

Hands from the verse versions, in the role of the jealous woman seeking revenge. It is also perhaps an echo of Guinevere's role of thwarting Morgain's love in the *Prose Lancelot*.[13]

Not long after this tournament Tristan rescues Palamedés, who is being set upon by Brehus Sans Pitié and eight other knights. Brehus Sans Pitié represents the antithesis of chivalry, embodying evil. He is a knight from Logres and is an interesting character in light of the contrast between Cornish and Logres knights. Cornish knights are seen as cowardly rather than evil, with Marc a possible, but not simplistic, exception. The character of Marc will be explored in greater detail later on, along with the Cornwall and Logres opposition, in Chapter Four.

Tristan and Palamedés agree to meet at the *Perron Merlin,* at a later date, to settle their differences, finally, in single combat. Palamedés is imprisoned and is unable to keep this promise, but Tristan believes the knight, who does turn up there at the appointed time, to be his Saracen rival. It is in fact Lancelot. The two knights undertake the cruellest of combats until they have to stop, completely exhausted. When they reveal their identities to each other the scene turns into an emotional greeting. Tristan and Lancelot, after weeks of searching, have finally met. Their relationship will also be considered under doubling of characters in Chapter Four. Lancelot takes Tristan to Arthur's court where he occupies Morholt's seat at the Round Table which had remained empty for ten years and two months. As is the custom he dictates his adventures to the clerks of Arthur's court, although he omits to tell them of his liaison with Iseut. Tristan's role as narrator of his own adventures will be examined later in this chapter. The fact that Morholt is portrayed as a knight of the Round Table further contributes to the emphasis on chivalry in the prose romance, compared to the verse versions. Similarly, in the *Lancelot-Graal*, Baudemagus is portrayed as a knight of the Round Table, another adaptation by the prose romance tradition. It is worth considering that while Baudemagus' presence at the Round

[13] For example, *Lancelot: roman en prose du XIII^e siècle*, ed. by A. Micha, 9 vols (Genève: Droz, 1978-83), V, 4, where Guinevere gives Lancelot an enchanted ring to overcome the magic of Morgain.

Table suggests a universalisation of the Arthurian community, absorbing alien if not enemy figures, the presence of Morholt serves to underline the antipathy between Arthur's realm and Cornwall. That Tristan replaces the man he killed also provides a variation on the oedipal patterns in the romance.

Back in Cornwall, Marc hears of the exploits of his banished nephew and fears that Tristan might invade, with the help of Lancelot and his lineage. His main fear is that Tristan would take back Iseut. Following in Tristan's footsteps, he therefore decides to set off himself into Logres to kill his troublesome nephew. Not long into his Logres foray, Marc kills a knight, Bertholai. Bertholai's sisters insist he appear before Arthur's court five days later. Teaming up with Dinadan, Marc has to confront a number of knights, and a series of unfortunate adventures, *en route* for Camelot. Once at court, he defends his honour by defeating Bertholai's champion. This victory subverts the custom of judicial combat. However, Lancelot knows of his guilt and forces him to admit all before the King – his crime and his name.

Interpolated here are some adventures with Dinadan and Palamedés. Lamorat appears on the scene once again and makes an impression as one of the best knights of his generation. Dinadan relates Lamorat's adventures to all when arriving at Arthur's court. We learn of Lamorat's affair with the Queen of Orkney, the mother of Gawain and his brothers, and the ensuing animosity between them and the young Lamorat. Lamorat is another figure who can be seen as a double of Tristan and embodies the misery of love. This will be looked at in Chapters Four and Five.

Marc remains at Arthur's court for a month. Arthur demands the reconciliation of uncle and nephew. They return to Cornwall. Their departure saddens Arthur's court. That winter Agloval and Perceval arrive, and Perceval is dubbed a knight. Once more Lamorat's exploits are discussed, but he is caught in bed with his lover and she is beheaded by her son, Gaheriet. The knight is spared because of his great prowess. This scene will be discusses as a recurring motif in Chapter Four.

There is an exchange of letters between Cornwall and Logres. Tristan, Marc, Arthur and Guinevere are all involved in courtly, and not so courtly, exchanges. Marc writes an insulting letter to Guinevere. When Dinadan reads it he retaliates by writing a *Lai Voir Disant* to be performed at court in Cornwall. These related letters embody different styles and ideologies, heteroglossia, and will be examined in more detail in Chapter Five. When the harpist arrives in Cornwall, to perform the *Lai Voir Disant,* the country is in the throes of war. The Saxons have invaded, believing Tristan still to be in Logres. Marc cannot resist their advance and has to call on Tristan for help. Tristan is slow to respond but eventually sees off the Saxons. Once more he is the saviour of Cornwall. It is during the victory celebrations that the *Lai Voir Disant* is performed. Marc is furious, and believing Tristan to be at the root of this, has his nephew imprisoned. When Tristan finally escapes, he flees to Logres taking Iseut with him, and leaves Marc behind, turning the tables on him once more by having him locked up in his own prison.

This concludes the second part of the romance.

Part III of the Romance

The final part of the romance relates the lovers' sojourn in Logres, the Quest for the Holy Grail, some passages of which are interpolated directly from the *Lancelot-Graal*, and traces Marc's invasion of Logres, in order to seize Iseut back. It narrates the lovers' eventual death. Arthur's court is portrayed in mourning and the concluding episode is that of Bohort relating the final adventures of the Quest for the Holy Grail to Arthur's court.[14]

Tristan and Iseut arrive in Logres not far from Camelot. Tristan refuses to go to court and Lancelot takes them to the *Joyeuse Garde*. There they can stay without interference from the outside world, and Marc, for several months. Arthur announces a great tournament at Louveserp to try to attract Tristan and Iseut to his court.

[14] The final part of the romance can be found in TLF V - IX. A summary of the action is in Löseth, *Analyse*, §§ 282-571.

Palamedés learns of Iseut's presence in Logres and, despite the warnings of Dinadan, he continues his quest for the queen of Cornwall's affection. He is offered hospitality by the couple at the *Joyeuse Garde* and accompanies them to the Louveserp tournament where his only motive is to surpass Tristan on the battlefield. His dream seems to be coming true when he wins the first day, but his joy is short-lived as Tristan eventually emerges the victor and carries off the prize of the tournament. Tristan's status in the Arthurian world is now assured, as is that of Iseut for her beauty. The people of Léon ask Tristan to come back to be their king. He refuses and orders that they continue to keep Gouvernal as their ruler. He remains for another summer and winter at the *Joyeuse Garde* before departing for Arthur's court to attend the Pentecost of the Holy Grail. Iseut stays behind, and here begins yet another period of separation for the lovers. Interpolated also is the account of the conception of Galahad, by Lancelot and the daughter of King Pelles.

Tristan arrives late at Arthur's court, missing Galahad's presentation at court and most of the remarkable adventures of that day. He joins the other knights in swearing an oath to seek the Holy Grail for one year and one day.

Interpolated here is a series of adventures from the *Queste del Saint Graal*, before returning to the adventures of Tristan.

Along with his fellow knights, Tristan engages in a number of combats, jousts and challenges related to the Quest for the Holy Grail. Galahad is emerging as the hero of the Quest for the Holy Grail. Tristan abandons it and responds to a desperate plea from Iseut to go back and see her . She has been at the *Joyeuse Garde* without him all this time. Delayed by various adventures, he eventually rejoins her, accompanied by Brunor, Dinas and Dinadan. Three months later he sets off again to help Palamedés who has been imprisoned.

Another section of the *Queste del Saint Graal* is inserted at this point, including the adventures of Perceval and his sister in Solomon's ship, interlaced with episodes

relating Tristan and Palamedés' adventures. Following the account of the death of Perceval's sister, the story returns to Marc of Cornwall. Marc has been separated from Iseut for over two years and is plotting his revenge. Safe in the knowledge that most of the knights of the Round Table are busy with the Quest of the Holy Grail, he forges an alliance with the Saxons and both armies invade Logres. They seize the *Joyeuse Garde*. Echoing the events in the Morois forest much earlier in the romance, Marc takes Iseut and heads for Camelot. The first battle is disastrous for Arthur but Galahad and Palamedés come to his rescue. Marc retreats to Cornwall, not worried about the huge military losses he has incurred, because he now has Iseut, who means more to him than all other things. There is a distant echo of Arthur's siege of the Joyeuse Garde to retake Guinevere in the *Mort Artu*.

Interpolated are further adventures from the *Queste del Saint Graal.*

Tristan who had been obliged to rest wounded in a nearby abbey learns from Galahad that Iseut has been taken back by Marc. This leads to a relapse and he spends the next six months close to death. Once healed, he roams again the kingdom of Logres and eventually heads for Cornwall accompanied by Sagremor. He is welcomed by Dinas, the good Cornish seneschal.

There is now a return to the initial love triangle in Cornwall, involving Marc, Iseut and Tristan. Tristan manages to see Iseut again in secret. Audret catches Tristan harping a *lai* to Iseut and denounces them to the king. This time Marc does not spare Tristan; he stabs him with the poisoned lance given to him by Morgain. This had been prophesied by Morgain earlier in the tale. Tristan languishes in agony for a month, and the king, rejoicing that his rival is dying, will not allow Iseut to see him. However, in the light of Tristan's extreme suffering, the king relents and visits his bedside with the queen. In their presence, Tristan addresses his final farewell to chivalry and his comrades in arms, Lancelot, Palamedés and Dinadan. He asks Sagremor to take his sword and his shield to the Round Table. His final words are for Iseut. He takes her in his arms for a last, dying embrace and she also expires; in death

they lie side by side. Marc, overwhelmed by what he has just seen, decides that the lovers should share a tomb at Tintagel. Sagremor carries Tristan's sword and shield to Camelot.

The narrator reports on the adventures of various knights during the Quest for the Holy Grail, including the eventual conversion and Christan death of Palamedés, and interpolates the final episodes of the *Queste del Saint Graal.* Finally, on hearing of the death of the lovers, Arthur and his knights go into mourning, vowing to wear black for a year. Returning to the court, Bohort relates the final events of the Quest for the Holy Grail and Gawain admits to the murders he has committed.

Narrative Technique

As we can see from this exposition of the plot, the romance operates on two temporal axes, one linear, one circular. Its linearity corresponds to the three stages of Tristan's biography in what has been identified as the three sections of the romance. This linear biographical thread, which is one structuring device, is constantly contextualised in an expansion of time and space, which requires a different structuring device. Repetition, in the guise of doubling of characters, and recurring motifs, which echo and are paralleled throughout, creates the impression of circularity. This is heightened by the use of inter-textuality. The wider, framing context of the linear account of Tristan's life is that of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle. The *Prose Tristan* has many episodes interpolated directly from this work.[15] This contextualisation of Tristan's biography creates a necessary simultaneity in the account, entailing digressions from relating a straightforward succession of events. Some of these digressions, inscribed as repetitions, through recurring motifs and doubling, have been signposted in the preceding plot summary and will be examined in the next chapter. Firstly, we shall examine another important aspect of the text's narrative technique, the role of the narrator, studied in the light of the prose romance tradition of the thirteenth century. The aim is to show how dialogism is inscribed at the heart of the *Prose Tristan*, as the

[15] See Baumgartner, *Essai*, pp. 126 ff, for a table showing interpolations from the *Lancelot-Graal* in the *Prose Tristan.*

borrowing from the *Lancelot-Graal* sets one principle of narration against another. The resulting tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces, generic and anti-generic forces, as discussed in relation to Bakhtin, will help to shed light on the text's ideology.

Entrelacement

The thirteenth century saw the transition from verse to prose within the romance genre. The *Prose Tristan* is drawn into this general movement to re-write verse romances in prose, in order to give them the 'truth' status of chronicles. The *Prose Lancelot* is traditionally regarded as the classic example of the prose romance because of its narrative technique, *entrelacement*. The phrase was first coined by Ferdinand Lot in his study of the text, when he described the narrative technique which ordered time and space in the romance.[16] Jean Frappier defines it succinctly when describing the organisation of the narrative in his study of *La Mort Artu*:

> ...elle est coupée comme le *Lancelot propre* et la *Queste* en chapitres... qui débutent par la formule usuelle: *Or dit le contes...* ou... *En ceste partie dit li contes...* – ces divisions sont enchevêtrées entre elles, ou plutôt imbriquées en quelque sorte, chaque episode étant tenu en suspens et laissant place à un autre, qui lui-même est à son tour interrompu pour permettre la continuation de l'épisode antérieur; bref la *Mort Artu* applique le principe de *l'entrelacement* ou du *parallélisme* d'une double et triple action, tel que F. Lot l'a défini.[17]

Therefore the interlacing episodes are framed and signposted, as narrative units, or chapters, by an introductory formula such as: *or dit li contes* and a concluding formula such as: *Si test or li contes d'els et retourne a....* It is this technique of *entrelacement* which creates the chronotope of simultaneity in the prose romances.[18] This technique is found but not exploited to the same extent in the verse romance tradition.[19]

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[16] Ferdinand Lot, *Etude sur le Lancelot en Prose* (Paris: Champion, 1918), pp. 17-28.

[17] Jean Frappier, *Etude sur La Mort Artu: roman du XIII^e siècle: dernière partie du Lancelot en Prose*, 2nd edn (Genève: Droz, 1961), p. 348. For further analysis of *entrelacement* see Cedric E. Pickford, *L'Evolution du roman arthurien en prose vers la fin du moyen age d'après le manuscrit 112 du fonds français de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Nizet, 1959) and Eugène Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance*.

[18] For a discussion of the term 'chronotope' see above Chapter Two, p. 29.

[19] Early examples of an alternating narrative technique appear in Marie de France's *Guigemar*, and

The expansion in time and space broadens the scope of the narrative, allowing features such as suspense and dramatic irony to flourish. This increase in scope corresponds to the encyclopaedic tendencies of the thirteenth century, the desire to include and explain everything in a single work. The *Prose Tristan* manifests its encyclopaedic tendencies by its attempt to contain a vast chronology. It aims to unite the verse redactions of the *Tristan* legend with the prose romance tradition of the *Lancelot-Graal*. One of the main advantages of *entrelacement*, as a narrative technique, lies in neatly facilitating simultaneity in the account and in producing a globalising, encyclopaedic effect: As Baumgartner says:

> L'enjeu le plus évident de cette technique est donc de créer des effets de suspens dans le récit, mais aussi et surtout de proposer une vision synoptique et plurielle d'un espace-temps romanesque qui, théoriquement, ne connaît plus de limites. Elle permet ainsi de donner au récit une sorte d'épaisseur temporelle, de substituer surtout au déroulement linéaire du temps, un temps représenté (représentable autant qu'il y a de personnages engagés dans la séquence) dans un même présent dont le récit feint d'épuiser les possibles narratifs. Elle joue ainsi un rôle considérable dans l'élaboration d'une écriture qui se veut exhaustive et globalisante et qui semble à la recherche d'une durée propre.[20]

Entrelacement, as well as facilitating the internal organisation and alternation of episodes, also allows the *Prose Tristan* to incorporate passages from the *Lancelot-Graal* into its own narrative. This method of writing, which incorporates passages from another text into its own narrative scheme, is called *compilation* and is also associated with the encyclopaedic tendencies of the romance tradition of the time:

> ...'compilation', qui consiste donc à réunir peu à peu, dans l'espace du manuscrit, tout ce qui concerne la matière arthurienne, à saturer le 'chronotope arthurien' naguère circonscrit, à l'aube du roman, par le *Brut*

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in Chretien de Troyes' *Lancelot*. The Good Friday episode in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, vv 6006-6009, may be a later interpolation influenced by Robert de Boron's christological Grail trilogy:

> De mon Seignor Gauvain se test
> Li contes ici a estal,
> Si parlerons de Perceval
> Perceval, ce conte l'estoire...

[20] Emmanuèle Baumgartner, 'Les techniques narratives dans le roman en prose' in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, Keith Busby and Douglas Kelly, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987-88), I, 167-190 (p. 178).

de Wace.[21]

The final part of the romance, which incorporates long passages from the *Queste del Saint Graal*, is a good example of the technique at work and is also a clear example of how the style and use of *entrelacement* in the *Lancelot-Graal* differs from that in the *Prose Tristan*. In it, passages from the *Lancelot-Graal* are juxtaposed with passages written especially for the *Prose Tristan*. In her introduction to TLF VI, which covers this section of the romance, Baumgartner points out that the narrative sequences framed by the formulae of *Or dist li contes...* and *Si se taist ore li contes a parler de lui et retourne a parler de...* are much shorter and more regular in the action they follow.[22]

The regularity and neatness of the *Prose Lancelot*'s *entrelacement* was seen by Vinaver, and many other critics, as superior to the *Tristan*'s style:

> The *Prose Tristan* shows a gradual deterioration of the method of interweaving.[23]

This dismissive attitude towards the *Tristan* is widespread but not justified, and assumes that it is but a pale imitation of its predecessor. Indeed it could also be argued that the irregularity is a deliberate ploy by the author/narrator of the *Prose Tristan*, to upset or undermine assumptions based on the earlier tradition. These value judgements aside, most critics agree that the organisation of the two texts is fundamentally different, while at the same time they bear some resemblance to each other.

In her *Essai,* Baumgartner states that our text does not use the process of *entrelacement* proper, but rather a process of *interruption* which implies the same suspension of action and change of direction in the account. As a narrative technique,

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[21] Emmanuèle Baumgartner, 'Compiler / accomplir', in *Nouvelles Recherches,* ed. by Dufournet, pp. 33-49, (p. 35). In this article Baumgartner also describes *compilation* as a means of importing different types of discourse into the text, the importance of which will be discussed later, in Chapter Five.

[22] See Baumgartner's introduction to TLF VI for a fuller description of this process.

[23] Eugène Vinaver, 'The *Prose Tristan*', p. 345.

it is less systematic; it is also not used consistently throughout our romance, only when the narrator wishes to follow the adventures of several characters at once.[24] Elspeth Kennedy also sees differences in the narrative techniques of the *Prose Tristan* and its predecessor, describing the *Prose Tristan* as disconcerting for any reader familiar with the *Prose Lancelot*, whose narrative technique is far more systematic and regular.[25]

In his introduction to TLF I, Philippe Ménard praises the author's perfect mastering of *entrelacement*.[26] The narrative transports us between Cornwall, Brittany and Logres. There may well be skilful alternating and switching of scenes of action, but, when we look more closely, it cannot be considered a strict application of *entrelacement*. Indeed, Ménard qualifies his initial remarks in a later article, affirming that, despite there being fifteen clear chapter divisions in TLF I, they do not all represent true *entrelacement*:

> Mais peut-on parler tout uniment de quinze entrelacements dans ce récit? Ce serait naïf. En effet, si l'on regarde le contenu de ces développements, on découvre, outre de véritables entrelacements, 1) de faux entrelacements, 2) des entrelacements authentiques, mais non marqués par les formules susdites.[27]

The two principal areas of difference between narration in the *Lancelot-Graal* and the *Prose Tristan* are the organisation of time and the role of the narratorial *je*.

Interventions by the Narratorial *Je*

The narration of events in the *Lancelot-Graal* would seem to be organised for the most part by the impersonal *li contes*, with the *je* of the narrator rarely in evidence.[28]

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[24] Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 282

[25] Elspeth Kennedy, 'Les Structures narratives et les allusions intertextuelles dans le *Tristan en Prose*', in *Nouvelles recherches*, ed. by Dufournet, pp. 123-147.

[26] Ménard, TLF I, p. 45.

[27] Ménard, 'Chapitres et entrelacement dans le *Tristan en Prose*', in *Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble: Hommage à Jean Dufournet professeur à la Sorbonne Nouvelle,* 3 vols, ed. by Jean-Claude Aubailly and others (Paris: Champion, 1993), II, 955-962, (pp. 956-7).

[28] Elspeth Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail: A Study of the Prose Lancelot* (Oxford: Clarendon,

In the *Prose Tristan* the tale is also narrated by the impersonal *li contes* but the *je* of the narrator intervenes frequently. The *je* has a clear editorial role, which appears in the framing formulae which resemble so closely, but ultimately undermine, those of orthodox *entrelacement.* In the *Prose Tristan* it is the *je* which selects the significant matter from the amorphous mass provided by *li contes*. There are many variations on the way the narrator's *je* stamps its authority in the body of the romance. In the prologue the authorial, translating presence is established also by a *je*:

> ...je Elys de Borron l'enprent a translater si com je sai et voel conmenchier en tel maniere.[29]

The author is not anonymous in the *Prose Tristan*, and two pseudonyms are linked to this voice. The prologue introduces the audience to the figures of Luce del Gat, and/or Helie de Boron depending on the manuscript.[30] He claims his source is originally written in Latin and posits himself as the translator.[31] In the *Prose Tristan* we are therefore dealing with the concept of author and translator from the outset. The pseudonym of Helie de Boron was no doubt inviting an assumption of kinship with Robert de Boron, hoping to create an aura of authority. This is reinforced by the indication of a Latin source, aiming to substantiate the claim for truth, despite the fact that there is certainly little doubt that the Latin source is fictitious. Throughout the romance this authoritative source will be represented by the voice of *li contes*. Contributing to this tension between truth and fiction is the adoption of prose for a romance text.

The prologue opens up the dialogue between author/translator and audience, and raises the issues of authority and truth status. Throughout the romance, the narrator

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1986), p. 156.

[29] TLF I, p. 19. See above p. 59.

[30] The question of authorship was discussed in Chapter One.

[31] The *Prose Lancelot* claims to be based on the knights' own account of their adventures, having sworn to tell the truth, and dictated to the clerks at Arthur's court. See Kennedy, 'Les Structures narratives', p. 127, for further discussion of this.

will continue this dialogue with frequent interventions, placing the enunciation of the romance firmly in the present, as the following examples will show.

The extra-diegetic dialogue with an audience, reader or listener, addressed as *vos* (*or vous*), appears within five paragraphs of the start of the romance:

> Endementires que la demoisele estoit en tel maniere et en tel aventure com je vos cont...[32]

It is often present at the beginning of a new narrative unit:

> En ceste partie dist li contes que quant Palamidés et Kahedins se furent departi du roi March, a qui il avoient tenu si grant parlement con je vous ai conté cha ariere... il lour avint adont k'il encontrerent un chevalier... Et se aucuns me demandoit qui li cevaliers estoit, je diroie que ce estoit Seguradés...[33]

In this example, taken from the beginning of a chapter, the voice of *li contes* narrates the current action and the narrator's *je* takes responsibility for what has gone before. The narratorial presence is further reinforced by the use of first person voice and perspective to identify the new arrival, Seguradés.

The *je* can also be involved in transitional phrases which signal the end of particular chapter as in this next example:

> Celui jour lour avinrent aucunes aventures dont il ne me caut mie granment de raconter en mon livre, pour ce que trop seroit grans anuis de raconter toutes les aventures et petites et grans, car ce sembleroit ausi conme uns detrïemens de tant parler d'une matere, pour ce que trop laide cose est. Et pour ce, vous conterai je briement ma droite matere et dirai en tel maniere.[34]

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[32] Curtis I, p. 41.
[33] TLF I, pp. 142-143.
[34] TLF II, p. 84.

Here the *je* is turning an *abbreviatio* formula into a statement of literary aesthetics. The narrator makes a proprietary claim, *ma matere* set against *ce dist li contes*, reinforcing editorial tendencies. The narrator also engages in a dialogue with the audience by addressing it directly as *vous*.

It is not only in relation to the current action that the *je* asserts its authority, but also in relation to earlier events, which help to clarify the present of the narrative, and the narrator represented by *je* is obviously keen to remind the audience of its power to withhold information or to provide it. In this instance, the narrator chooses to inform the audience of events which had occurred a generation earlier in order to clarify the context of the present of the action:

> Et pour ce que cestui fait apartient a nostre hestoire, ne vous ne sariés pas le conmenchement se je nel vous devisoie, vous voel je deviser pour coi li rois Boors avoit fait fonder celui castel ne pour coi il estoit apelés du roi Boorth... Ichi endroit nous deviserom du roi Uterpandragon et de deus freres... du roi Boorth de Gaunes et du roi Ban de Benuÿc.[35]

The *je* also appears in the midst of a sequence of events, earlier introduced by *li contes*, especially if the narrative unit, framed by the formulaic *li contes*, is very long. A typical example is found in the passage narrating Marc's early adventures in Logres, where the *je* reminds the audience of its presence, and then of its role as the story-teller:

> Que vous diroie je?... Ensi com je vous cont, parole li rois March a soi meïsmes et si coiement toutes voies que li cevaliers ki estoit assés pres de lui ne l'entent mie; ne li rois ne vausist pas volentiers k'il l'entendist ne ki'il s'aperceüst de lui... [36]

In this instance the narrator's position of omniscience, which is shared with the audience, allows them to know more than the characters involved in the scene, and

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[35] TLF III, p. 68.
[36] TLF IV, p. 143.

thereby creates dramatic irony, where one knight does not realise that he is being overheard by another. It helps to create complicity between the narrator and the audience.

The *je* may show features of omniscience on some occasions, but on others is unable to conceal its limitations:

> V
> ... Que vous diroie je? Assés furent cele nuit servi et houneré plus k'il ne furent piecha mais en lieu u il venissent. Mais atant laisse ore li contes a parler d'aus trois et retourne a Palamidés pour conter conment il li avint de cele aventure k'il emprist ensi com li contes a devisé.
>
> VI
> En ceste partie dist li contes que, quant Palamidés se fu partis de ses compaingons, ensi com je vous ai dit, il s'en ala par mi le Hombre avoec les maronniers... [37]

In this instance, the *je* is acting as a compiler at the end of Chapter V and cannot tell any more about the evening's entertainment as *li contes* breaks off and starts something else. It is almost as if the *je* is refusing responsibility for *entrelacement*. It also puts the *je* on a level with the audience, and is temporarily acknowledging the authority of *li contes*. The beginning of Chapter VI asserts that *je* has recounted the substance transmitted by *li contes*.

In another example the narrator insists that he or she is responsible for narrating the *conte*, doing away with the objective, impersonal impression created by the *Lancelot-Graal*, which gives the illusion of the tale telling itself:[38] This underlines how *li contes* speaks, *dit*, the narrative, and the *je* transmits it using the verbs *deviser* and *conter*. This use of *devisant* for people transmitting 'real stories', *nouvelles*, will still be current in the sixteenth century.

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[37] TLF V, p. 182.

[38] See Michèle Perret, 'De l'espace romanesque à la matérialité du livre: l'espace énoncatif des premiers romans en prose', *Poétique*, 50 (1982), 173-182, for a discussion of the impersonal narrative voice of *li contes* in the prose romance.

> En ceste partie dist li contes ke, quant Engenés se fu partis de Galaad pour la doutance des .XL. cevaliers, dont je vous ai le conte devisé ... [39]

Passages concerning Lancelot or Galahad, contrast with this, and there are times when the *je* is absent:

> XVII
> ...Mais atant se taist ore li contes de tous et retourne a Galaad, pour chou que conmenchie doit estre la Queste par lui.
>
> XVIII
> Or dist li contes que quant Galaad se fu partis de ses compaingnons... [40]

When the tale returns to Tristan, the *je* reintervenes:

> En ceste partie dist le contes que, puis que mesires Tristrans ot fait le brief qu'il manda a la roïne Yseut, ensi conme je vous ai conté cha ariere... [41]

These examples show how the narratorial *je* is in evidence as an organising factor, at times filtering the voice of *li contes*, from the outset displaying strong editorial tendencies.[42]

This is a prominent role for the *je* not assumed in the *Lancelot-Graal*. Kennedy believes that this activity of the narratorial *je* is inextricably linked to the different narrative structure of the *Prose Tristan*, stemming from the source of the material as posited within the narratives themselves. The *Prose Lancelot* is based on the knights' accounts of their own adventures which they dictate to the clerks at Arthur's court. The knights vow to be truthful in their reports of what happened, be it to their honour or their shame. Only those adventures deemed relevant to the tale of Lancelot are selected for the *Prose Lancelot*, and are narrated to the audience by the voice of *li contes*. There is a clear contrast between the personal narration of past events by knights, and the impersonal narration provided by the voice of *li contes*. The audience

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[39] TLF VII, p. 205.
[40] TLF VI, p. 278.
[41] TLF VII, p. 165.
[42] *Que vous diroie je* is also used as a standard formula for abbreviation in the *Lancelot-Graal*, albeit less frequently. Similarly, *deviser* is used in relation to *conte* and *je* in that cycle.

is referred to a particular knight's own tale, or to the *conte del commun*, to follow adventures which have not been selected for the *Prose Lancelot*. The adventures of certain knights, which have been selected, are followed systematically and without gaps. The narratorial *je* occasionally intervenes to justify the selection of certain adventures over others, and to give the audience additional information not included in the knight's account, but these interventions are rare. The voice of *li contes*, which narrates the adventures, is impersonal and does not pass comment on any of them.[43]

Therefore the structure of the *Prose Lancelot* is more unified as each narrative thread is linked to the adventure of a particular knight, as related by himself to Arthur's clerks. The process of the narration of the whole tale is kept quite separate. The chronology of the text is also very tightly organised, as shown by Ferdinand Lot.[44] In the *Prose Tristan* this is not the case, with no knights' adventures being followed systematically and matters are further blurred by the fact that on some occasions knights narrate events in general, rather than simply their own exploits. In the midst of all this, the intervening narratorial *je*, as we have seen, also passes comment on the literary process. Kennedy sees this as attacking the technique of *entrelacement*, with which the audience of the *Prose Lancelot* would have been so familiar.[45] Yet, despite the apparent authority of this narratorial *je,* subverting the authority of *li contes*, there is also evidence to suggest that *li contes* does retain a certain degree of authority while the limitations of the *je* are exposed.

The voice of *li contes* in the *Prose Tristan*, as in the *Lancelot-Graal*, does not have editorial tendencies, and therefore is explicitly subservient to the *je* of the narrator.[46] This would suggest a hierarchy between *je* and *li contes*. The *je* declares itself as having a say in what is selected, in contrast to the self-effacing *li contes.* It is the *je* which constantly reinforces editorial tendencies. Baumgartner says:

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[43] Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, pp. 156 ff.
[44] Lot, *Etudes*, Chapter III.
[45] Kennedy, 'Les Structures narratives', pp. 133 ff.
[46] See Perret, 'De l'espace', pp. 173-182.

> Machine à conter bien rodée, la voix du conte, dans le *Tristan en Prose*, ne sait plus que machinalement conter, parler, se taire, assurer le tout venant du récit. Dès qu'il faut intervenir sur le matériau, trier, accélerer le tempo, pratiquer des ellipses, ménager des retours ou se projeter dans l'avenir, devient nécessaire la présence du narrateur, d'un maître du récit seul habilité à en régler le cours et à organiser le destin de ses personnages.[47]

However, one could also invert this argument and suggest that *je* acts as a scholastic editor/commentator of an authoritative text. The Latin source, referred to in the prologue, is a pose of authority, and, on the surface anyway, defines the scope of the material available to the narrator. *Li contes* is not totally subjugated to the voice of the narrator. It may be undermined at times, but, on other occasions, does impose its own authority. The narrative technique in the *Prose Tristan* accommodates both narratorial voices and, therefore, is not a clear-cut rejection of what went before.

Lyn Pemberton has also written about the organising influence of the narrator in the *Prose Tristan,* albeit in contrast to the narrator in Béroul's *Tristan*, rather than in contrast to the narratorial voice in the *Prose Lancelot:*

> The majority of authorial interventions in the *Tristan en Prose* refer to the author's handling of the story and may be divided into structural and conversational interventions.[48]

It is worth pointing out here that there is some confusion as to whether Pemberton means author or narrator. For the purposes of our discussion the *je* is that of the narrator, who may be conflated in performance with *récitant*.

When comparing the prose and verse redactions of the legend, Pemberton notes that the interventions in Béroul's verse romance differ from the prose text's, as Béroul's narrator is more involved with the characters and the story. He is committed, whereas the prose narrator is more removed. Pemberton points out that in the *Prose*

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[47] Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *La Harpe et l'épée: tradition et renouvellement dans le Tristan en Prose* (Paris: SEDES, 1990), p. 50.
[48] Lyn Pemberton, 'Authorial Interventions in the *Tristan en Prose*', *Neophilologus*, 68 (1984), 481-497 (p 491).

Tristan the interventions are either conversational or pertain to the organisation of the text. She suggests that this perhaps reflects an interest in form and technique which is as important as the story being told:

> This may reflect the growing importance of the author and his will: He is no longer willing to be subservient to the story like the narrators of the early *chansons de geste*. Perhaps in the passage from Béroul to the author of the *Tristan en Prose* we have lost the story teller and gained the prototype of the self-conscious artist.[49]

However, Pemberton's argument begs the question of the source of the prose romance, and also does not take into account Thomas' version of the romance, which has a different emphasis from Béroul's, being widely recognised for its use of rhetoric, dialectic, monologues and allegory. It also ignores the status of translator of a pre-existing Latin story which the author gives himself in the prologue. This source may be fictitious, but the author is attempting to give credibility to his text by emphasising its dependence on a text having the 'authority' of the learned language.

We should not underestimate the complexity of the narrative techique in Béroul's *Tristan*. It has been argued convincingly that Béroul was also a self-conscious artist, exploring the philosophical issues of the time, such as Abélard's ethics, involving debate on intentionality and sin, human and divine justice:

> ...ce jongleur, qui était aussi peut-être un clerc, du moins de la marge des écoles, a simplement l'air de présenter à un public féodal et courtois, et dans toute sa complexité morale et légale, la controverse philosophique et théologique qui sévissait dans les écoles à son époque.[50]

Nevertheless, it is true to say that, as far as the *Prose Tristan* is concerned, it is rare for the narrator to comment directly on the action in a way that would influence the audience. One rare example is when Tristan and Iseut drink the love potion:

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[49] Pemberton, 'Authorial Interventions', p. 496.

[50] Philip Bennett, 'Jugement de Dieu, Parole d'auteur: Béroul et le débat sur l'intentionnalité au XII[e] siècle', in *Tristan et Iseut: un thème éternel dans la culture mondiale: 30ème congrès du Cercle de travail de la littérature allemande au moyen âge, Mont Saint Michel, le 27 septembre - 1 octobre 1995*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger et Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald: Reineke, 1996), pp. 13-25. (p. 25).

> Ha! Diex, quel boivre! Com il lor fu puis anious! Or ont beü; or sont entré en la riote qui jamés ne faudra tant com il aient l'ame el cors. Or sont entré en cele voie dont il lor covendra sofrir engoisse et travail tot lor aaige. Diex, quel duel! Il ont beü lor destrucion et lor mort.[51]

This rare, but passionate, interjection by the narrator presupposes an oral presentation, which the prose romance did share with the verse romance. This was accompanied, though, by an adoption of more bookish rhetoric and a different aesthetic which drew attention to *écriture*. This aesthetic of the book is particularly associated with the impersonal narration of the *Lancelot-Graal*.

Michèle Perret and E. Jane Burns have both written about the aesthetics of the book in relation to the *Lancelot-Graal*, with particular reference to the impersonal narration of *li contes*, and the implications for issue of authorship and authority:

> On se trouve donc en présence d'un procédé original de narration, où la plupart des fonctions qui reviennent au narrateur sont assumées par des instances provenant du récit lui-même. Le texte s'auto-génère, pour sembler toujours déjà là. La parole-voix, récit, devient écriture, une écriture qui n'est pas figée, mais en devenir, comme changent les inscriptions sur le siège périlleux à l'approche de Galaad. Le livre devient son propre père, tandis que la relation énonciative primaire locuteur – public s'efface au profit de cette fiction d'une communication circulaire où narrateurs et destinataires se renvoient indéfiniment les mêmes fragments de texte, sans jamais s'extraire du récit.[52]

Similarly, Burns comments on the absence of author/authority in the *Lancelot-Graal*, and the autonomy of the account:

> And yet the voice of the master is nowhere to be found in the Vulgate narratives.... If the *Quest* and the *Lancelot* portray author-heroes who are neatly embedded in the fictional world of romance, both texts also take the process a step further by fusing the teller with the tale itself.[53]

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[51] Curtis II, p. 65.
[52] Perret, 'De l'espace', p. 175.
[53] E. Jane Burns, *Arthurian Fictions*, pp. 12-13.

In comparison, therefore, the *Prose Tristan* could seem to be regressing from a narrative trend established by the earlier prose romances, in favour of a more *jongleur*-orientated approach, associated with the verse tradition of the twelfth century. It could, on the other hand, be seen as a precursor of the *nouvelle* style of the fourteenth century, as mentioned above.[54]

The interventions by the *je* in the *Prose Tristan* are not usually of an emotional or judgmental nature. For the most part, in our text, any subjective narratorial opinion is implicit rather than explicit. Judgements of actions or events and comments on ideals at stake are uttered by the characters themselves rather than by the narrator:

> En fait c'est plutôt à travers la parole des personnages, dans le 'dit et le contredit' des 'parlements' que s'énoncent dans le *Tristan* jugements et points de vue sur les êtres et sur le monde.
>
> La plupart des interventions du narrateur, qui se coulent dans des formules du type *et sachiez que*, *tant ez vos*, *ensi com je vos ai devisé ci devant*, *et se aucuns me demandoit... je diroie que* etc. concernent en effet presque exclusivement l'organisation du récit tout en associant par le biais d'un pseudo-dialogue entre le *je* du narrateur et le *vous* du narrataire l'éventuel lecteur/auditeur à la production même du texte qu'il est en train de découvrir.[55]

Van Coolput also notes that the interventions themselves may seem innocent enough, rarely interfering with the meaning of the passage, but they contribute to the overall effect of an omnipresent narrator, and create an impression of control:

> Il n'est presque pas de page où l'on ne rencontre des pronoms de la première et de la seconde personne. Leur présence isolée ne dérangerait sans doute guère le fil du récit, étant donné que leur portée sémantique est souvent assez faible... mais il n'empêche que la fréquence de ces furtives apparitions finit par leur donner un certain poids: le lecteur s'accoutume à voir quelqu'un s'interposer entre l'histoire et lui.[56]

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[54] See above, p. 81.
[55] Baumgartner, *La Harpe et l'épée*, p. 56.
[56] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant,* pp. 211-212.

Omnipresence is not to be confused with omniscience. Often the narratorial interventions serve to cover up a lack of knowledge and gaps in the story, and can even transfer a certain amount of authority and potential for initiative to the reader. Baumgartner says of the recurrent phrase *Que vous diroie-je*:

> '*Que vous diroie-je?*' signale ... une ellipse plus ou moins longue du récit tout en assurant la relance de la phrase ou de la séquence. Elle lie ainsi de manière assez habile, sous couvert de l'impuissance du narrateur à épuiser sa matière, la nécessaire condensation de la durée à l'insignifiance momentanée des aventures (de l'espace parcouru par le chevalier errant), et rappelle chemin faisant les limites de la mimésis. Mais elle autorise également le lecteur comme l'éventuel remanieur / compilateur à imaginer une sorte d'état latent de l'aventure et à exploiter peut-être, dans un récit autre, ses inépuisables ressources.[57]

This omnipresence could also be seen as a ploy to compensate for a lack of authority on the narrator's behalf:

> La voix du conte peut avoir des blancs. Le cheminement du récit peut parfois se perdre sous couvert de la forêt ou dans la nuit des temps. Le narrateur omniprésent du *Tristan* masque de sa présence obsédante, couvre de sa voix les failles mêmes de sa matière.[58]

The omnipresent narrator does not always manifest the surplus of vision characteristic of an omniscient narrator. The audience is not sure how much to trust the narrator's knowledge and alleged sources of the tale. For an audience listening to the romance, rather than reading it, inconsistencies and vagueness are less problematic. This has to be borne in mind when reading a thirteenth-century work in the late twentieth century. Audience expectations were different and far more geared to the oral tradition than to a tradition of literacy and study of the written word. The prose romances did herald the aesthetics of the book. Literacy was more widespread in the thirteenth century than in the twelfth century, although probably not significantly so. The survival of so many manuscripts of the romance demonstrates the increased importance of the book as a cultural icon, but does not necessarily provide proof as to how the owners

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[57] Baumgartner, 'Compiler / accomplir', pp. 38-39.
[58] Baumgartner, *La Harpe et l'épée*, p. 53.

received the content.[59]

In her conclusion, Colette-Anne Van Coolput observes that the importance of the narrator's articulations lies in the fact that they signal the self-consciousness of the literary creation. This is in contrast to previous prose romances which emanate from an:

> *avant texte* qui est à l'origine de la signification et du récit tout entier. Personne n'énonce ces romans français: le texte paraît se dérouler de lui-même de façon autonome.[60]

As we have just seen, this is not the case for the *Prose Tristan*, with the narratorial *je* organising the impersonal narration of *li contes*. The *je* and the impersonal *li contes* are not the only narratorial voices in the romance.[61] In another departure from the model of the *Prose Lancelot*, the knights who arrive at Arthur's court in the *Prose Tristan* do not necessarily tell their own tale, but relate the adventures of others in a more general fashion. For example, it is Dinadan who relates the adventures of Lamorat to Arthur's court before Lamorat actually arrives there:

> Chertes, ce dist Dynadans, che vous conterai je bien. Et sachiés que vous ne tenrés pas a petite mervelle che que je vous conterai ja des oeuvres de Lamorat et de ses fais.[62]

Tristan acts as narrator of his own adventures when he arrives at Arthur's court, and he dictates his adventures to a single clerk, mimicking the *Lancelot-Graal* source narrators:

> Lors conmencha a deviser toute sa vie si conme de ses chevaleries, non mie d'autre fait, car du fait de lui et de la roïne Yseut n'i tint il onques

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[59] See Elspeth Kennedy, 'The Scribe as Editor', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature offerts à Jean Frappier, Professeur à la Sorbonne, par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*, 2 vols (Genève: Droz, 1970), pp. 523-531, for a discussion of how certain surviving *Prose Lancelot* manuscripts has provided evidence of reception, with supressions or additions which seem to have been made to conform with the special interests of scribe or patron.

[60] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 190.

[61] The variety of voices in the romance will be looked at in Chapter Five.

[62] TLF IV, p. 205.

> parlement a chele fois. Mais toutes les chevaleries sans faille qu'il avoit faites des le tans du Morhaut et dont il li pooit souvenir dusc'a celui jour conmença il adonc a conter devant le roi et devant la roïne et devant les compaingnons de la Table Reonde ki illuec estoient a celui point.[63]

By omitting the affair with Iseut, Tristan is selecting themes and details with the same editorial authority as the narratorial *je*, who decides whether or not adventures are worth relating. He also uses the verb *deviser*, associated earlier with the voice of *je*. Therefore, the narratorial *je* and the *li contes* do not monopolise the role of authority. There is space in the text for the other voices, *li contes* and characters. Given that Tristan does not relate the details of his relationship with Iseut to Arthur's court, the story, the Latin source cited in the romance's prologue, must have had another source, other than these clerical records.[64]

These irregularities can be taken as a warning to the audience that the narrator does not always do as he says. This makes the narration of events and narratorial interventions problematic, in so far as the narrator would seem to be unreliable at times.

In the *Prose Tristan* it is this same unreliable narrator who actually confers meaning on the text, thereby undermining the mystical origins of the account present in the *Lancelot-Graal*, which effaces the narrator's activity for the most part.[65] The *Prose Tristan* narrator emphasises the present of literary creation:

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[63] TLF III, p. 295.

[64] In the *Prose Lancelot* there are similar omissions in Lancelot's account to Arthur's court of his adventures. See *Lancelot*, ed. by Micha, IV, p. 395. This example would also suggest a source other than the clerical records. The narrator in the *Prose Lancelot* can be unreliable at times, but less often than the narrator of the *Prose Tristan*.

[65] It is the *Estoire del Saint Graal* which suggests these mystical origins. The *Estoire* precedes the *Prose Lancelot* in the narrative chronology of the *Lancelot-Graal*, but was in fact a late addition, written circa 1230-35 (the *Prose Lancelot* was written between 1215 and 1225). Therefore the *Prose Lancelot* was composed as if based simply on the knights' accounts brought back to Arthur's court. However, one could argue that by the time the the vulgate of the *Prose Tristan* was written the narrative chronology of the *Lancelot-Graal* had perhaps superceded the chronology of composition. It is also worth noting that Van Coolput's study is based on the *Queste*, and not all of her generalisations apply to the *Lancelot-Graal* as a whole.

> La première sénéfiance du *Tristan en Prose* c'est d'avoir déplacé l'origine du sens, de l'avoir mise au présent, là où la main humaine intervient pour former les signes.[66]

According to Van Coolput, the corollary of this is to upset the theocentric assumptions of the pre-existing Grail romance tradition:

> L'oeuvre ne prétend plus détenir le Sens ni la Verité: elle connaît ses propres limites, qui sont celles de celui qui l'énonce. [67]

Therefore, the identifiable difference in the role of the narrator in the text can be seen to be accompanied by a difference in ideology. This is certainly true, up to a point. The *Prose Tristan's* narrator would seem to undermine the authority of *li contes* and the use of *entrelacement*. However, he does not reject it out of hand, nor does he set himself up as the sole authority. The reality would seem to be more nuanced and complex than that. After all, extensive portions of this text borrow directly from the *Lancelot-Graal* and employ its narrative technique faithfully. The juxtaposition creates a dialogue between the two techniques, and thereby does challenge the authority of the older technique. However, the newer technique is also subjected to scrutiny, being compared to what has gone before and what audiences may have come to expect. That the audience's preference will be for the narrative technique in the *Prose Tristan* is not a foregone conclusion.

Van Coolput, as already stated, sees the *Prose Tristan* as a resistance to the ideology of the Grail from the treatment of history in the text to the Grail Quest itself. Assessing the *Prose Tristan's* incorporation of both Tristan's ancestry and the pre-existing Grail texts, Van Coolput also suggests that it is actively subverting the tradition it follows so closely. This argument is related to her interpretation of the account of Tristan's ancestry as mentioned in the earlier plot summary.[68]

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[66] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 216.
[67] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 220.
[68] See above, p. 65.

With regard to the Quest for the Holy Grail, Van Coolput maintains that the *Prose Tristan* has a strong secularising tendency, which is very much at odds with its predecessor.[69] The figure of Galaad is drawn into the world of chivalry and portrayed as any other knight at times, rather than as a messianic figure. During the adventures of the Quest for the Holy Grail, Dinadan narrates some of Galaad's adventures in the company of Brehus Sans Pitié, and how he, Dinadan, of modest repute in the domain of prowess, defeats the hero of the Grail Quest in a joust:

> Quant je vi çou, Diex le set, bien volentiers eüsse laissié la jouste, se je le peüsse faire hounerablement. Mais je ne poi onques en nule maniere qui fust u monde, car Galaad m'estoit si pres qu'il me venoit le glaive alongié, tant conme il pooit du ceval traire. Et quant je vi c'a jouster me couvenoit, u je vausisse u non, je mis adont tout en aventure et laissai courre a Galaad de cuer et de cors et de volenté. Et avint par boine aventure, ne sai conment il pot estre fors par la defaute du ceval, mais tant di je tout hardiement que je fis voler a tere lui et le ceval.[70]

This episode helps to confirm Dinadan's role as sceptic. He is a questioner of values and in this instance he defeats Galahad, the embodiment of the Cistercian *miles Christi*. It is Galahad's pseudo-messianic status which guarantees him chivalric invulnerability in the *Queste* and that predestinatory role is challenged by Dinadan's view that his victory was an inexplicable accident.

This sort of anecdote, interpolated with passages quoted verbatim from the more pious adventures of the Quest for the Holy Grail, does create yet another unsettling juxtaposition for the audience between both styles and ideologies. The lesser importance of the Quest for the Holy Grail is also confirmed when Tristan abandons it, in order to rejoin Iseut in Cornwall, once she has been seized from the *Joyeuse Garde* by Marc, and carried off back to his kingdom.

This results in a jarring incompatibility of tone between the *Prose Tristan* and the

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[69] See Van Coolput, *Aventures Querant*, pp. 116-187, for Van Coolput's study of the relationship between the *Prose Tristan* and the *Queste*.
[70] TLF VI, pp. 358-359.

Queste del Saint Graal, which Baumgartner sums up well in her introduction to TLF VI:

> D'additions en entrelacement, les traces se multiplient ainsi, dans l'épisode de la Pentecôte du Graal, de la dissonance du monde, de l'impossibilité où se trouve désormais l'univers chevaleresque de perpétuer, sous le signe imposé du Graal, l'alliance harmonieuse de la joie d'amour et de l'exploit héroïque, cette alliance qu'ont fugitivement incarnée Tristan et Iseut dans l'étincelante parade de Louveserp ou dans le bonheur plus secret du séjour à la Joyeuse Garde.[71]

This dialogic relationship between the *Prose Tristan* and its predecessor the *Lancelot-Graal* can be interpreted in the light of Bakhtin's thought, as an important development of the genre of the prose romance. There is a tension between generic and anti-generic forces. The anti-generic forces are manifest in the intervention of the narratorial *je*, which challenges the authority of the source material by imposing its own editorial tendencies. The voice of the narratorial *je*, in the *Prose Tristan*, is indeed a troubling and disturbing one, upsetting assumptions based on the earlier tradition, thereby also disturbing the ideology of the earlier tradition. The emphatic *je* has an air of authority and manipulates *li contes* accordingly, but, as pointed out above, there are exceptions to this. It also draws the audience into a dialogue in the immediacy of the performance, giving a different temporal perspective on the narrative content. It is a clear example of an adaptation of form being inextricably linked to a shift in content and ideology. This shift, though, does not automatically imply a complete rejection of what went before.

According to Van Coolput, the *Prose Tristan* rejects out of hand the view of chivalry as an allegory for the history of salvation. Instead, it remains firmly in the realms of secular chivalry. She reinforces this by also stating that omitting the *Mort Artu* from the end of the romance and mentioning Charlemagne, indicate an avoidance of that inevitable destruction of the Arthurian world, while anticipating a glorious future.[72]

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[71] TLF VI, p. 23.
[72] Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, p. 84.

While much of what Van Coolput has said is valid, in a dialogic reading the difference in ideology should be viewed more cautiously. After all, the *Prose Tristan* does end with a very clear *annonce* of the *Mort Artu*. Bohort arrives back at Arthur's court, relates the final adventures of the Grail, and Gauvain's treachery is revealed. By using the universe of the *Lancelot-Graal* in the first place, the author of the *Prose Tristan* would have expected his audience to be acquainted with that version of the Arthurian legend. The audience would have known what was to come at that point. They would, however, be invited to consider, alongside the well-known fate of Logres, the future of Cornwall following the death of the lovers. This is also an outcome which is not related in the text, but left to the audience's imagination. The final reference to Marc is as a king repenting of his evil crime against Tristan. The redemption of Marc is not ruled out by the *Prose Tristan*.

Reading the text dialogically allows for the possibility of author and audience holding both views and representations of the chivalric world, assessing them in relationship with each other. This will be considered more closely in Chapter Four when discussing doubling in the romance. The ideology is inextricably linked to the narrative technique and the text contains its own style along with the styles of its tradition. There is the incorporation of orthodox *entrelacement* in the passages interpolated from the *Lancelot-Graal*. This juxtaposition raises questions about both compositions, but does not necessarily favour the more recent innovation. There is an invitation for the audience to consider the two strands and to draw their own conclusions. Both techniques and ideologies are subject to scrutiny in comparison with the other. The predominantly anti-generic style of the *Prose Tristan*'s composition would not necessarily have found favour with the entire audience, nor would its voice necessarily have been heard over that of its illustrious predecessor.

Given that the cause of anti-generic forces in the *Prose Tristan* has been identified as the narrator's *je*, we need also to examine other aspects of its role in the narrative

technique. Through its interventions, in the framing formulae at chapter divisions, it also asserts control over the organisation of time in the romance. The ordering of the romance's chronology is an important function of *entrelacement*, and we shall now consider the importance of the chronology of the *Prose Tristan*, also governed by the narrator's *je*.

Chronology in the *Prose Tristan*

As we have seen from the previous discussion, the narrative technique in the *Prose Tristan* differs from the earlier model of *entrelacement* in the *Lancelot-Graal*, despite some surface similarities. The frequent and unpredictable interventions of the *je* are in stark contrast to the predominantly impersonal narration of its predecessor. The status and authority of the narratorial *je* are ambiguous. It expresses certitude but also proves inconsistent, disturbing assumptions which may have been based on the earlier tradition of the *Lancelot-Graal*. The other main area of difference in narrative technique between the two texts is the organisation of chronology.

Our aim here is to give examples not only of how the *Prose Tristan* differs from the *Lancelot-Graal* in its chronological organisation and sequencing of events, but also of the inherent interest and complexity of its own marking of time. There is a mixture of regularity and irregularity in the account, which is quite disconcerting. The linear progress of Tristan's career is to be accompanied by numerous sub-plots and parallel themes, some more developed than others. There would seem to be two competing chronotopes, one of linearity, closer to what Bakhtin considered 'real historical time', which, given the overall biographical shape of the romance, attemps to rein in the other chronotope, that of simultaneity and expansion. The *Lancelot-Graal* also displays this tension between linearity and simultaneity, albeit more neatly and systematically than the *Prose Tristan.* The *Lancelot-Graal* is not without its own temporal complexitiy. For example, the eschatological nature of the Grail Quest could be seen to unify time in creating a temporal logic that overcomes it, at least for

the period of the *Queste* itself; but this in itself does not embrace the whole cycle.[73] The discussion in the rest of this chapter will concentrate on the narrator's role in the *Prose Tristan* in marking temporal and spatial progression and switches within the text, and to what extent, if at all, time is unified in the *Prose Tristan*. The use of repetition and recurring motifs, which provide a discernible circularity in the romance, will be examined in the next chapter. The tripartite division of the romance used in the plot summary above will be used for this discussion.

When considering the marking of time in the romance, we need to bear in mind the orality of fiction at the time. The contemporary audience would most probably have listened to the text rather than engaging in a silent reading. Therefore, any inconsistencies, which we as late twentieth-century readers pick up through careful reading and re-reading, would not necessarily have been obvious in the transmission and reception of the romance in the thirteenth century. We cannot rule out, though, that other more obvious differences and discrepancies would have been discernible to an attentive and well-trained ear.

Similarly, the whole complex issue of chronology must be considered in the light of the relativity of time in fiction.[74] For the purpose of our discussion, certain general categories will provide a point of reference and framework when looking at the issue of time and temporal markers in our text.

In his work on the representation of time in romance, Philippe Walter suggests some useful categories and definitions of temporality in texts, both verse and prose. These

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[73] The pattern of interlace and the treatment of time in the *Queste* is different from that of the rest of the cycle; it is an allegory and works in general on a different plane, one which the characters within it find confusing. Earlier adventures are reinterpreted in the *Queste*, but meanings given there only seem to apply to that period. Branches of *Lancelot* in volumes I - VI of Micha's edition are fairly frequently marked as leading up to the Grail Quest in chronological terms. After the *Queste*, when the time of adventures is stated as being over, there are very different patterns in terms of linear progression and switches both in relation to the *Queste* and to what preceded it and a reinterpretation of events recounted previously. In the part of the Lancelot story leading up to his becoming a knight of the Round Table the Grail adventures are referred to as lying outside Lancelot's story in all but a small group of manuscripts, not as a future adventure within it.

[74] See Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), for a purely narratological view of time in fiction.

provide a good point of reference and can be applied in our analysis. He comments on the diversity of temporal markers in the prose romances:

> D'une manière générale, les marqueurs temporels paraissent assez restreints et peu variés dans le cadre du roman en vers; dans le roman en prose par contre, ils présentent une plus grande diversité. Au fil de celui-ci, on trouve une série très étendue de fêtes, de mois et de jours.[75]

Walter distinguishes between *temps qualitatif* and *temps quantitatif*. *Temps qualitatif* is characterised, for example, by religious hours and feasts, which give a rhythm to the day and the year respectively, allowing for times of intensity and more ordinary time. It can indicate a concept of time as circular, based on the principle of return; for example Christian eschatology with its belief in the second coming of Christ would fit this perception of time, hence the analogies between Galahad and Jesus both with Messianic status. The invention of mechanical time-keeping will gradually pave the way for *temps quantitatif*, where the passing of time is measured in equal units. This is more linear in nature.[76]

Walter also identifies the oppositions of *chronologie continue/discontinue* and *chronologie absolue/relative*. *Chronologie continue* is characterised by a careful succession in the account, whereby lapses of time are carefully noted with temporal markers, and all periods of time accounted for. *Chronologie discontinue* is characterised by ellipsis and gaps in the narrative. *Chronologie absolue* refers to a particular moment which is portrayed as autonomous and in no need of further elucidation, for example, the mention of a precise day or feast. *Chronologie relative* has to situate itself in relation to a temporal marker in an earlier episode. Each phase of the narrative refers to a previous event or to a future one. It conveys an impression of continuity in the account.[77] The transition from verse to prose affected the representation of time. Walter states that the prose romances, having lost the mould of verse, can appear more fragmented at times and may contain gaps which are not

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[75] Philippe Walter, *La Mémoire du temps: fêtes et calendriers de Chrétien de Troyes à la Mort Artu*, Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Age, 13 (Paris: Champion; Genève: Slatkine, 1989), p. 86.
[76] Walter, p. 86.
[77] Walter, p. 97.

concealed by metre and rhythm. The prose romance, as a genre, could be seen to be a synthesis of both kinds of time, operating on a linear axis and on one of simultaneity.

He then proceeds to describe the representation of time in the *Queste del Saint Graal* as *qualitatif*:

> ...on pourrait dire que l'auteur de la *Quête* (mais le phénomène est déjà présent dans le *Lancelot*) s'intéresse moins au temps des horloges qu'à un temps imaginaire: il vise un temps qualitatif porteur d'une valeur spirituelle plus qu'un simple substrat temporel quantitatif.[78]

This backs up the earlier observation by Van Coolput, who sees the *Lancelot-Graal's Queste* as unifying the great themes of religion and chivalry.[79] The eschatological dimension is a perfect example of *temps qualitatif*. In contrast she interprets the *Prose Tristan* as being more disjointed and made up of autonomous moments which do not contribute to a unifying totalising theme or ideology, that is, using *temps quantitatif*.[80] As stated earlier, in relation to the presence of the narrator's *je*, this has an effect on the text's ideology.

It has already been said that the *Prose Tristan* is characteristic of the encyclopaedic and compiled literary works of the early thirteenth century, as Philippe Walter puts it: 'animé du même esprit de totalisation'. Indeed, as Walter points out, the *Prose Tristan* links to Arthurian and biblical time, and even brings in the pagan era, before the evangelising of Britain.[81] In this way the *Prose Tristan* takes universal history as its model for writing narrative. Neatly incorporated into this chronological framework, which goes from the time of Joseph of Arimathea to the end of the *Mort Artu*, how does the *Prose Tristan*, with all its irregularities, actually represent the passing of time?

As mentioned earlier, the adventures of individual knights in its predecessor, the

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[78] Walter, p. 153
[79] Elsewhere in the *Vulgate Cycle* there is a tension between these two themes.
[80] See above p. 65.
[81] Walter, p. 74.

Prose Lancelot, are followed very efficiently:

> ...les aventures... sont suivies avec constance jusqu'à la fin d'une séquence particulière d'aventures, leurs fils narratifs ne souffrent pas de failles, et l'entrelacement est étroitement organisé.[82]

This is not the case with the *Prose Tristan*. The transitions between narrative units are not so closely linked to the narrative thread of a particular knight's adventures. It is not unusual for them to contain allusions to what will follow.[83]

The following survey of the representation of the passing of time is mainly based on TLF I - IX. This will confirm the dual structure of linearity and simultaneity already noted.[84]

Part I

The first part of the *Prose Tristan* is the most linear of the romance. Tristan's ancestry, childhood and early career are traced in chronological sequence. During some of the more complicated sequences of events dealing with Tristan's ancestry, narrative units alternate between different characters, but the chronology remains relatively straightforward, as the account propels us forward. There are no long gaps or significant absences of major characters from the text for more than a few paragraphs. Therefore, the framing of narrative units, with the formulae associated with *entrelacement*, is not really necessary. According to Renée Curtis, alternation and expansion in the account only begin with the marriage of Tristan to Iseut of Brittany. The narrator leaves Tristan in Brittany for quite a while and interpolates adventures of Lamorat and the *Vallet a la Cote Mautailliee*. Tristan returns to the action 177 paragraphs later.[85] Alternation becomes an integral part of the romance's structure once the kingdom of Logres begins to emerge as an important space for action to take place. Yet, when alternation becomes prevalent in the course of the

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[82] Kennedy, 'Les Structures narratives', p. 129.
[83] Kennedy, 'Les Structures narratives', p. 132.
[84] See above, p. 73.
[85] Curtis III, pp. XXI - XXVIII. The paragraph divisions in Curtis are not quite the same as in the TLF edition as she does not consistently follow the textual formulae involving *li contes*.

romance, the chapter divisions are far from predictable or regular.

TLF I consists of fifteen chapters, that is narrative units framed by the introductory and concluding formulae of *li contes*, of unequal length. If we examine some of the transitions closely, they do not always correspond to *entrelacement* or alternation. This phenomenon is all the more disconcerting given that at times they do. Chapter II is concluded as follows:

> Atant laisse li contes a parler de lui et de toute cele compaingnie et retourne a Kahedin pour deviser conment il vint en son païs et conment il morut au daerrain pour les amours de madame Yseut de Cornuaille. (TLF I, p. 142) [86]

This is an orthodox use of the narrative technique and serves to switch our focus to other characters and another place, to a contemporary adventure.

In Chapter III Palamedés and Kaherdin meet Seguradés on their travels and there follows the usual exchange of greetings and challenge to joust. Once the joust is resolved, and identities are revealed, Seguradés goes his own way and the account returns to Palamedés and Kaherdin. This, rather surprisingly, merits a chapter division:

> Atant laisse ore li contes a parler de Seguradés et retourne a Palamedés et a Kahedin. (TLF I, p. 145)

This is signposting a bifurcation. However, it is interesting to note that it is not followed up, but rather is suspended, falling into the black hole of simultaneous adventures which do not make their way into the *contes*. Seguradés does not reappear in the romance until the tournament at Louveserp in TLF V. Needless to say, there is no recapitulation of his wanderings during this protracted interval when he does reappear.

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[86] As this part of the discussion deals with the edition volume by volume, page references will be given in brackets following the quotation. Normal practice will be resumed on p. 114 under the heading 'Gap Filling and Centrifugal Forces'.

The main focus of Chapter IV is the retrospective account of the founding of the Abbey of Gaunes, which takes the reader back to the time of King Boorth of Gaunes. The *Prose Tristan* contains frequent recalls of past happenings and occasional projections into the future which shift the emphasis and constantly change our perspective, as we shall see later. In this instance the geographical location is stable, it is the temporal perspective which has shifted. The chapter concludes by once more returning to Kaherdin and Palamedés and again giving the audience an indication of what is to come:

> Or se taist atant li contes a parler de Boorth de Gaunes et retourne a nostre matere pour conter conment il avint a Kahedin et conment il caï es amours de la roïne Yseut, le feme le roi March de Cornuaille, avant que il se partist de la tere de Cornuaille. (TLF I, pp. 150 - 151)

The erratic framing of narrative divisions is accompanied by a marked disparity in the length of chapters. Chapters III and IV were relatively short. Chapter V on the other hand spans thirty-seven pages, and incorporates a variety of characters. The main focus is still Kaherdin and Palamedés, although they part company on page 190. Mid-chapter there is no formula with *li contes* to mark this significant shift although the narrator confirms his presence and he uses the verb *conter*, conflating his authority with that of *li contes*:

> En tel maniere con je vous cont se departent li doi cevalier: Palamidés s'en vait vers le roiaume de Gorre au plus droit k'il onques puet et Kahedins s'en vait vers la mer tout le grant cemin ki de Cornuaille venoit. (TLF I, p. 190)

Subtly the account turns its attention to Kaherdin and his discontentment with chivalric customs as well as his misery in love. Once he has arrived in Brittany, Chapter X provides a link with Cornwall with the arrival of a messenger. The interweaving of places and themes is, in this instance, achieved most skilfully. As a simultaneous adventure, the temporal reference has expanded, but remains stable in simultaneity, and the location has switched:

> En celui tans, ce dist li contes, que Kahedins demouroit si merveilleusement es amours de madame Yseut, il avint que uns harperes, ki tout nouvelement estoit venus de Cornuaille et avoit assés eüe l'acointance de monsigneur Tristran et de madame Yseut, vint en la Petite Bretaingne. (p 226)

The chapter relates the exchange of verse *lais* between Kaherdin and Yseut, switching between the two places. The chapter spans both locations, within the same time span and concludes with the untimely death of Kaherdin, reinforcing his personal tragedy by referring to the grief of the whole kingdom of Brittany:

> Tous li païs en fu aprés ceste mort grant tans en tristreche et en dolour. Mais atant laisse ore li contes a parler de tous chiaus de la Petite Bretaingne et retourne a la roïne Yseut et a ciaus de Cornuaille. (TLF I, p. 243) [87]

Part II

The second part of Tristan's biography, which follows on from the death of Kaherdin and Tristan's banishment from Cornwall, provides an interesting portion of the romance to study in relation to narrative technique and organisation. It is a clear example of the balance between the linear account and expansion in time and space. The romance embarks on a new direction with the banishment of Tristan from Cornwall and his foray into Logres. The polarity between Logres and Cornwall becomes an ever increasingly important factor in the romance's structure with Brittany losing importance in the account following the death of Kaherdin. TLF II, III and IV comprise the second part of the romance.

TLF II starts with the banishment of Tristan from Cornwall after his *folie*, and ends with his triumph at the tournament of the *Château des Pucelles*. Tristan's movements are very much the focal point of these pages. For the first time in the romance, the account moves fully into the kingdom of Logres, with only brief returns to Cornwall to monitor the reactions of Marc and his people to Tristan's departure, and to keep

[87] The recurring motif of grief and misery in love will be considered in Chapter Four.

track of Iseut's state of mind. It has twenty chapters, which make up five unequal parts.[88]

Chapter divisions in this section are marked by the familiar formulae *Mais atant laisse ore li contes a parle ... et retourne a* and *Or dist li contes que...* Along with the disparity of length, Marie-Luce Chênerie points out the unpredictable nature of chapter divisions in her introduction to the volume. Some divisions are sequential in nature, others alternating.

It is clear, early on in TLF II, that there will be inconsistencies in the manner in which time is traced and marked. For example, following accounts of Tristan's first adventures in Logres we discover in Chapter XI of TLF II that he has been absent from Cornwall for two months. Prior to this indication it was impossible for the audience to follow the chronology in detail. These temporal markers do give a semblance of order but are undermined by the number of times we lose track of how much time has elapsed. There had been few temporal markers up to this point except the mention of night falling.[89] This suggests that a day's travel could be seen as a narrative unit, indicating that the narrator has as his 'horizon of expectation' an audience capable of taking in and retaining 'une journée', but perhaps not capable of keeping in mind, while listening to the next narrative segment, a concentration of 'journées'.[90]

The narrator has made frequent use of ellipsis demonstrating his power of selection and control in order to advance the action. The use of the formula *Que vous diroie je?* signals *abbreviatio* on top of ellipsis, as the narrator dispenses with recounting the details of what happened, informing the reader of the bare minimum. For example,

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[88] See TLF II, p. 39.

[89] For example, TLF II p. 148, Tristan and Dinadan receive hospitality. After a switch in the intervening chapter to Lancelot and companions of the Round Table, the account returns to Tristan and Dinadan rising the next morning, TLF II p. 163.

[90] See below, p. 110 ff. for references to day and night during Marc's adventures in Logres. The time-keeping in Marc's episodes in TLF IV is more detailed than in those of Tristan and Dinadan.

'Que vous diroie je? Cele nuit fu la feste grans u castel'. (p. 154).[91] When a sequence of events recounted in some detail is ended in this fashion, it imparts a certain rhythm to the narration. The time is mainly *temps quantitatif* and marked sporadically. Frequent use of *chronologie discontinue* creates the impression of a fragmented text. The locus, Logres, is relatively constant but becomes labyrinthine in its proportions and appearance. Precise geographical indicators within this space are lacking, barring a few major landmarks, such as the *Perron Merlin*, and Arthur's court.

As in TLF I, the passages that linking formulae frame are not obviously justifiable as narrative units, such as one would expect in properly organised *entrelacement*. A good example of a successive transition is found between Chapters III and IV. In both chapters the place and characters, Tristan and Dinadan in Logres, remain the same:

> III
> Celui jour lour avinrent aucunes aventures dont il ne me caut mie granment de raconter en mon livre, pour ce que trop seroit grans anuis de raconter toutes les aventures et petites et grans, car ce sembleroit ausi comme uns detrïemens de tant parler d'une matere, pour ce que trop laide cose est. Et pour ce, vous conterai je briement ma droite matere et dirai en tel maniere.
>
> IV
> Un jour avint par aventure, ce dist li contes, que mesire Tristrans et Dynadans vinrent a un pont...(TLF II, pp. 84-85)

As mentioned earlier, the statement of selection and control by the narrator takes precedence over the impersonal voice of *li contes*. There is effective use of an *abbreviatio* formula by the *je*. A hierarchy is being established between *je*, and *li contes*, which becomes raw material to be fashioned into a book. There is implied

[91] There are other examples of the use of this formula for *abbreviatio* and ellipsis on pages 117, 163. There is an example of this usage also in TLF IV; see below p. 108. The phrase can also be used as a rhetorical device in the speech of characters, e.g. 'Que vous diroie je? Ne vi piecha mais un cevalier que je prisaisse autretant de cevalerie' (TLF II, p. 263).

entrelacement, there are stories in *li contes*, between Chapters III and IV, but the *je* chooses to suppress them in order to return more quickly to his characters.

Chapter divisions may be sequential and also have switches of character and of perspective within a chapter. For example in Chapter V, p. 103, the account switches effortlessly, almost imperceptibly, from Tristan and Dinadan to Morgain. Tristan, with minimal help from his companion, has seen off a group of thirty knights waiting to ambush Lancelot at the command of Morgain. The combat is narrated through the eyes of knights who are spectators. Immediately the scene switches to that of Morgain receiving the news. Tristan and Dinadan are no longer mentioned. Chapter VI begins with a formal switch back to Tristan and Dinadan after the combat:

> En cheste parti dist li contes que, quant li cevalier Morgain furent tourné a desconfiture en tel maniere con je vous ai conté cha ariere, mesire Tristrans, quant il les ot un poi cachiés, il s'en retourna a Dynadant et li dist... (TLF II, p. 121)

We also see how *li contes* has responsibility for narrating the current situation while the *je* assumes responsibility for what has been written in the past.

As has already been said, there is a mixing of alternation with succession. Alternating chapters tend to take us back in time, whereas the successive ones take the account forward. Between Chapters X, and XI we return in time and place to Cornwall and Iseut. Glossing over the previous two months' events in Logres, it brings the audience neatly up to date with what is happening in Cornwall.

> X
> ...mais atant laisse ore li contes a parler de tous ches .IIII. cevaliers et retourne a la roïne Yseut pour deviser aucune cose de son estre, dont li contes s'est ore teus une gran pieche de li, et pour ce retourne il ore sour li.

XI
En ceste partie dist li contes que, quant mesire Tristrans fu partis de Cornuaille ensi con je vous ai conté cha ariere, la roïne Yesut, ki l'amoit de si grant cuer que mortel dame ne peüst amer plus cevalier, fu tant dolante de son departement... ele atendi bien deus mois entiers... mais ensi li avint adonc que nules nouveles n'en venoient. (TLF II, p. 190)

The *je* does not figure at the end of Chapter X, and this would seem to imply that it is in fact *li contes* itself, rather than the narrator's *je,* which manifests this tendency toward comprehensiveness, rather than requiring to have it imposed on it by the narrator at this point.

Throughout this second part of the romance we have inconsistent chapter divisions, which at times mark alternation and at others succession. At times we experience simultaneity, at others a journey back in time. Linking characters, such as Iseut's messenger, or Kaherdin, help to provide the transitions in place and switches of focus. They are important narrative functions in this respect. Compared with the *Lancelot-Graal*, these chapter divisions may well seem erratic, but they do have a certain coherence, with either a temporal or a spatial link.

The second half of the volume is dedicated to the tournament of the *Château des Pucelles*, which slows down the pace and exhibits a different kind of narrative skill. As a recurring motif the tournament constitutes an element of *temps qualitatif* set against the usual use of *temps quantitatif* in the *Prose Tristan*.

TLF III traces Tristan's progress from the end of the tournament to his admission to the Round Table. It has twenty-nine chapters and interweaves many themes and adventures. The chapter divisions are as unpredictable as in the earlier volumes and of unequal lengths. There is some orthodox use of *entrelacement* to alternate between sub-plots and also to create suspense and dramatic irony. It also raises the issues of temporal switches, initiated both by the narrator and some of the characters.

It begins with the quest for Tristan, vowed by Lancelot and his fellow knights, which

is interlaced with Tristan's own search for Lancelot. Tristan himself expresses the irony of the situation to Palamedés, having just rescued him from a difficult situation with Brehus Sans Pitié:

> Et la estoie je alés pour ce que g'i cuidoie sans faille trouver Lanselot du Lac, mais je ne l'i peuc trouver, ce me poise mout cierement. Mout me tarde durement que je le voie, car je sai tout vraiement k'il se travaille cascun jour pour moi querre, et ja a maint jour passé k'il entra en queste pour moi, et de chelui travail le jeteroie je mout volentiers, se Dieu plaisoit. Et certes, s'il me desirre a veoir, je ne desirre mie mains lui s'il me quiert, et je le vois autresi querant. Or esgardés en con grant painne il est pour moi, et je pour lui autresi! (TLF III, p. 243)

The rivalry between Tristan and Palamedés is as intense as ever. They arrange to meet at the *Perron Merlin* to finally settle their difference in single combat in fifteen days' time (p. 241). Then, instead of mistaking Palamedés for Lancelot, Tristan will mistake Lancelot for Palamedés. The narrator intervenes to reveal all this to the audience in advance:

> A che s'acordent ambedoi. Mesire Tristrans i fu sans doute a celui jour et en celui lieu meïsmes k'il avoient aterminé mais Palamidés n'i fu mie, car il fu dedens chelui termine emprisonnés dedens le Castel de la Flege, si n'i pot estre a chelui jour. Mais, pour ce se mesire Tristrans ne trouva pas adonc Palamidés devant le Perron Merlin, ne remest il mie k'il n'i trovast bataille toute la plus fort et la plus merveilleuse k'il onques trouvast a nul jour de sa vie. Il aloit bataille querant, si le trouva a chelui point, car en chel lieu meïsmes u il quida trouver Palamidés trouva il Lanselot du Lac, a qui il se combati celui jour. Et celui jour proprement s'en alerent entre monsigneur Tristran et Lanselot du Lac en la maison le roi Artu.... En tel maniere com je vous cont orent li compaingnon de la Table Reonde en lor compaingnie monsigneur Tristran en cange du boin Morhaut d'Yrlande. (TLF III, pp. 241-242)

The *je* is therefore intervening and revealing future events to the audience. The audience and *li contes* will wait several folios for the full, detailed account of their meeting. There is also a rare temporal marker with regard to how much time has elapsed in the romance:

> Et sachiés que par tele ocoison avoit il esté huiseus .X. ans et deus mois tout droit, et tant avoit adonc de tans que mesire Tristrans avoit esté nouviaus chevaliers et k'il avoit ochis le Morhaut. (TLF III, p. 293)

The narratorial intervention here characteristically places the audience, yet again, in a position of superior knowledge to that of the characters in the romance. It shows how the narrator has the power to propel the audience into the future of the account, momentarily changing the temporal perspective. It also helps to create dramatic irony, but the narrator is exploiting what Bakhtin calls a 'surplus of vision' which is not very novelistic. In the previous example where the narrator intervened to inform the audience of Palamedés' future actions it is worth noting the narration of future events in the past historic. It is a sign of the disjunction between the temporal plane on which the characters and the narrator and audience exist. That is to say, that, in this instance, the narrator displays features of omniscience, and does not disguise the fact of being very much in control of the story as it unfolds. In monologic works the surplus knowledge enjoyed by the narrator puts him, or her, on a different plane from the characters; they therefore cannot enter into a dialogue as equals.

However, it has also been shown that the narrator does not always display qualities of omniscience, unable or unwilling to conceal gaps in the narrative. He is also not the only voice which is endowed with knowledge of future events in the romance. Projections into the future also occur intradiegetically by prophesies from characters. Tristan is told in no uncertain terms by one of Morgain's young aides that he will die from the same lance with which he has just killed her mistress's lover:

> Or sachiés, fait ele, que je emport chest glaive a ma dame Morgain, ki avant ersoir vous herberga. Vous ocesistes son ami de chestui glaive meïsmes, ensi com vous le savés, et de chestui glaive meïsmes vous couvenra morir. Et sachiés tout chertainnement k'il en avenra tout ensi com je le vous ai dit, ja si ne vous i sarés garder. (p. 222)

It should be noted that Morgain's servants project her supernatural prescience into the text; such figures, human, animal or heavenly derive from the dual origin of romance

material in Celtic myth and Christian hagiography. The acceptance of such characters by the audience allows the author to play with hierarchical levels normally separating narrator from character in secular narrative.[92]

The fact that certain characters share the narrator's prescience helps to modify the Bakhtininan position on 'surplus of vision'.

The narrator is also responsible for switching time to the past. In the case of the story of Blioberis's castle it is the narrator who interrupts the sequence of events to inform the audience of its history. François Suard emphasises that, in doing this, the narrator creates the impression of a great distance in time, between the present of the narration and the past of events narrated.[93]

The temporal switches operate along with spatial switches between Cornwall and Logres. Kay, Gaheriet and Yvain travel to Cornwall in their quest for Tristan. Welcomed at Marc's court they escape from the king's treachery by outwitting him at the *Lac Aventureux*.[94]

In TLF IV there is a further development in the opposition between Cornwall and Logres. King Marc follows Tristan into Logres. Two interesting examples of quite careful time-keeping in the romance come in volumes IV and V respectively. They are good examples of *temps quantitatif* with a mixture of *chronologie relative* . The narrator carefully documents Marc's first foray into Logres. When Marc arrives in Logres in pursuit of Tristan we are told how he treacherously slays Bertholai, one of the knights in his company. Bertholai's sisters demand justice and to see Marc at

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[92] Tristan himself is also endowed with prescience through dreams and visions. Towards the end of the romance, in TLF VII, he has two such dreams, one which reveals that Marc will seize Iseut from the Joyeuse Garde and also announces the eventual downfall of Arthur's kingdom. Another dream announces the death of the lovers, and Tristan sees himself dismembered by Marc, with his heart torn from his body. See TLF VII, p. 251 and p. 305.

[93] TLF II, pp. 68-71; See François Suard, 'Le récit à distance de soi-même dans le *Tristan en Prose*' in *Et c'est la fin: Hommage à Jean Dufournet*, III, 1297-1305.

[94] TLF II, pp. 94 - 165. Chapters VIII - XIII relate the adventures of Gaheriet, Ivain and Kay in Cornwall. The treachery and misfortune of Audret and Marc are very much in evidence, and the king is truly ridiculed in a manner which prefigures his adventures in Logres in the next volume.

Arthur's court six days hence : 'Or i soiom d'ui en .VI. jours' (p. 75). The first night falls and Marc meets Lamorat: 'la nuis vient auques noire et oscure.' (p. 76). Day two: 'A l'endemain mout matinet' (p. 85) Marc sets off on his own. Later that day he teams up with Dinadan. He lodges with him that night: 'Et en celui penser s'endort dusc'au demain, que li jours parut clers' (103). Day three: 'A l'endemain... il montent andoi et se partent de laiens' (p 103). There follows comic rivalry and antics between Dinadan and Marc when they encounter knights from Arthur's court. At the end of the day: 'il se couchent tout maintenant, car li lit estoient fait, et se dorment dusc'au demain que li jours aparut.'(p. 126), and day four arrives: L'endemain bien matinet, il se lievent et apareillent et se font armer vistement' (p 126). Soon after he has separated from Dinadan, night falls on Marc's wanderings once more 'Ensi chevauce li rois March tout adés forvoiant cha et la, tant que la nuit est venue noire et oscure, ki si grant destourbier li fiat k'il ne set onques de quel part il doie tourner' (p. 141). In the dark, he overhears a knight singing and lamenting his love. The account then returns to Dinadan and takes us back to the afternoon of day four. He meets up with Palamedés and they end up in the same place as King Marc. Day four finally closes: 'Et quant il en ont assés longement parlé, il s'endorment tout ensi armé com il estoient. Ce ne fait mie li rois March. Il ne dort pas, ains pense mout a autre cose... Et quant il voit que li jours voloit aparoir, il se part des .II. chevaliers et vient la ou il avoit laissiés ses deus esquiers...' (p 162).[95] The narrator glosses over the rest of Marc's journey to Arthur's court, exercising powers of selection, control, *abbreviatio* and ellipsis of time – or, as has also been suggested above, covers up for gaps in the material:

> Que vous diroie je? Puis que li rois March fu venus au grant chemin, il chevaucha puis tant par ses jornees sans reposer soi, se trop petit non, et sans aventure trouver ki fache granment a ramentevoir en conte k'il vint au jour de sa bataille en la maison le roi Artu, auques sains et haitiés. Et fu chelui jour droitement k'il avoit aterminé as damoiseles, ensi com je vous ai dit. (TLF IV, pp. 162-163)

[95] As with the earlier example from TLF II, concerning the adventures of Tristan and Dinadan in Logres, a day's adventures and wandering would seem to constitute a narrative unit. See above p. 103.

Following Marc's arrival and events at Arthur's court, the account retrieves Dinadan and Lamorat. Chronology becomes much more vague. We are brought up to date at the start of Chapter VIII:

> En cheste partie dist li contes que bien un mois entier et plus demoura li rois March avoec le roi Artu, en quel que lieu que la court alast sejournant. (TLF IV, p. 219)

The rhythm of the account is variable and unpredictable. The account can be detailed and precise or it can sweep through long periods of time in one sentence.[96] When detailed it enhances the dramatic impact of what is being related. Marc's foray into Logres is an unexpected twist in the tale which brings him closer to Tristan and emphasises how they are linked. Their relationship will be studied in Chapter Four.

In the introduction to TLF IV, Jean-Claude Faucon notes the unexpected use of the formulae which usually mark chapter divisions:

> Le texte est divisé en chapitres de longueur très inégale. Nous en trouvons quinze dans le ms. A, allant de 1 à 59 paragraphes. L'apparition de la formule *dist li contes* ne rythme pourtant pas les alternations de lieux, avec lesquels elle coïncide rarement, ni même la progression thématique. Elle ne souligne pas nécessairement les articulations temporelles. Quand le chapitre est court (de 1 à 6 paragraphes), il sert en fait à mettre en valeur les moments intenses du récit... Pour les chapitres plus longs, la rupture narrative est le plus souvent faible et la nature de leurs limites ne se distingue guère de celle des paragraphes. Ils possèdent toutefois une certaine unité d'ensemble: départ *en tapinage* du roi Marc et ses premières aventures (II, 11 paragraphes), railleries et mystifications de Dinadan, (III, 59 paragraphes), nouvelle amitié et débats entre Palamidès et Dinadan (IV, 15 paragraphes), rivalités chevaleresques de Palamidès et de Dinadan devant le château de Morgain (VI, 33 paragraphes), Lamorat à la cour d'Arthur (VII, 9 paragraphes), tristes exploits successifs de chevaliers indignes (XI, 22 paragraphes), lecture des lettres de Tristan et d'Arthur à la cour de Marc (XIII, 21 paragraphes), combats contre les Saxons (XIV, 59 paragraphes). (TLF IV, pp. 29 - 30)

This thematic unity does allow the longer chapters to operate as building blocks in the

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[96] See above p. 104 for another example of the use of *abbreviatio* ellipsis to vary the rhythm of the narration.

narrative, albeit not as systematically as in the *Prose Lancelot*. The variety of emphasis, perspective and tempo within the account is the work of a first-rate story teller. The narrator manipulates time, space and action with ease and fluency, shifting from one time scale and location to another. This particular sequence of events in the romance has a strong internal coherence.

TLF IV ends with Tristan escaping from Marc's prison and taking Iseut off with him to Logres. This also marks the end of the second part of the romance.

Part III

One of the focal points of the final part of the romance is the portrayal of the tournament at Louveserp in TLF V. Passages of this type and descriptive passages counterbalance the frequent ellipses. The *Prose Tristan* makes limited use of description apart from during the tournament scenes. As Thierry Delcourt points out in his introduction to the volume, the tournament is the main focus of this section of the romance, and of great importance thematically. The high point of Tristan's chivalric career, it is also Iseut's finest hour. In the absence of Guinevere she outshines all ladies present with her beauty. Arthur himself proclaims her 'la plus bele dame du monde' and Tristan le 'meilleur cevalier du monde et le plus bel' (p. 347) The tournament brings together the major characters of the romance.[97] It is a centralising narrative function in many ways. Corresponding to this organising function is a very tightly controlled, strict chronology. The time-scale extends from the end of April, when the tournament is announced, to the first fortnight in June when it takes place. Described with the exactitude of a chronicle, the action is not disrupted. It is one of the most focused and intense passages in the whole romance. There are many themes and sub-plots, interwoven and developed. Rather than being a digression, it brings together different narrative threads. Documenting an event in such detail is an aesthetically pleasing contrast to some of the briefer accounts elsewhere in the text, and allows the audience to enjoy a lavish scene in the romance,

[97] See Philip Bennett, 'Tournaments in the *Prose Tristan*', *Romanische Forschungen*, 87 (1975), pp. 335-341. The tournaments will be discussed in Chapter Four as a recurring motif in the text.

with description of actions taking precedence over advancement of action.

Overall, the narrative technique in the third and final part of the *Prose Tristan* is a little more difficult to assess than in the previous two. The manuscript Vienna 2542, used for the TLF edition, adopts the Version III at this point, rather than Version II which is considered to be the vulgate.[98] Both versions II and III incorporate fragments from the *Queste del Saint Graal.* Version III also incorporates passages taken from the *Prose Lancelot,* notably the part known as *Agravain.*[99] *Entrelacement* is the technique used to incorporate elements from different texts into another one. Given that the *Prose Tristan* is inserted into the chronology of the *Lancelot-Graal,* the switches between the various texts are quite discreet.[100] Baumgartner points out how variable the frequency of the appearance of the framing *entrelacement* formulae is. Indeed, there are three different source texts and three different narrative techniques included in one manuscript. The *Prose Lancelot*'s shorter sequences produce sharper outlines.[101]

In TLF VII, attention is refocused on Tristan and Iseut. Despite this, they will not spend much time together. Tristan's chivalric duties keep him away from the *Joyeuse Garde* where Iseut is residing. A messenger from Iseut provides the link between the queen and her lover, as at the beginning of TLF II when Tristan goes to Logres and she remains behind in Cornwall. This occurs in the first chapter:

> Quant ele ot le brief enclos, ele fait devant li venir un vallet qui longement l'avoie servie, se li baille le vaissel tout priveement atout le brief. "Or tost, fait ele, biaus amis, met toi en la voie sans delaiement. Va t'ent par le roiaume de Logres, et pres et loing, tant que tu puisses aprendre nouveles de monsigneur Tristran...' Et lors se depart li vallés de sa dame qu'il n'i fait autre delaiement et se met esranment an cemin.
>
> Atant vait li vallés par ses journees querant amont et aval, demandant tot adés nouveles de monsigneur Tristran... (TLF VII, pp. 81-83)

[98] See Chapter One for discussion of manuscript tradition.
[99] TLF VI, p. 13.
[100] Baumgartner, 'Compiler / accomplir', pp. 33-49.
[101] See TLF VI, pp. 12 ff. for an assessment of the interlacing of the different source texts into the manuscript Vienna 2542, and the variation in narrative technique.

Entrelacement is used to alternate between Tristan and Galahad:

> Mais atant laisse ore li contes a parler de ceste cose et retourne a parler de Galaad pour conter partie de ses aventures. (TLF VII, p. 147)

The impending doom of the lovers and, eventually, of Arthur's kingdom are revealed by two dreams that Tristan has at this stage. In the first he has a foreboding of the havoc that Marc will shortly wreak in Logres:

> Lors li avint une avision merveilleuse, car il li ert avis qu'il estoit sour la rive de la mer et regardoit ver Cornuaille; et veoit venir un oisel grant et merveilleus qui venoit el roiaume de Logres et conmenchoit a voler par unes contrees et par autre; et portoit cil oisiaus fu et l'espandoit par tout la u il veoit et en la Joiouse Garde, et le destruisoit et prenoit la roïne Yseut et l'emportoit a la mer. Aprés s'en aloit a Camaaloth et couroit sus au roi Artu et il ostoit la couronne del cief, et a poi qu'il ne l'ocioit. Aprés ce venoit uns autres oisiaux et l'asailloit et se combatoit a lui tant que a force le cachoit hors de la contree. (TLF VII, pp. 251-252)

In the second dream he has a foreboding of Yseut's death and his own:

> La li avint une avision assés merveilleuse, car il li estoit avis qu'il estoit a a Joiouse Garde et que, par devers Cornuaille, venoit une grande flambe de fu, qui ardoit le Castel de la Joiouse Garde et jetoit par tere. De cele flambe moroit la roïne et li rois Marc couroit sus a monsigneur Tristran et le tiroit et abatoit monsigneur Tristran par tere, puis li traioit les bras du cors et le cuer du ventre; tous li mons aloit criant aprés et disoient: "Mors est mesire Tristrans!" et demenoient doel trop grant. (TLF VII, pp 305)

As was mentioned earlier, in relation to the prophecies of Morgain, these projections into the future do help to level out the hierarchy of narrator and character, while helping to inform the audience of what is to come.[102]

As in TLF VI, TLF VIII interpolates large sections of the *Queste del Saint Graal.*

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[102] See above p. 108.

TLF IX recounts Marc's invasion of Logres with the Saxons, incorporates the death of the lovers, and the final adventures of the Grail Quest. It concludes with Bohort returning to Arthur's court and relating these events. The romance, still within the overall chronology of the *Lancelot-Graal*, ends at the point where the *Mort Artu* begins. A neat closure in some respects, it nevertheless leaves unresolved the impending fate of Marc and Cornish chivalry. The narratorial *je* is not present at the conclusion of this particular manuscript, and, perhaps, fittingly, leaves the final word of authority to *li contes*:

> Si se taist ore li contes atant des aventures du Saint Graal, que plus n'em parle, pour ce qu'elles sont si menees a fin que aprés ce compte, n'em pourroit nul riens dire qui n'en mentist. (TLF IX, p. 285).

So, as we can see, the *Prose Tristan* is not without internal coherence, despite certain irregularities. The interweaving of adventures and characters from different places resembles *entrelacement* closely, but in fact the building blocks for the narrative are thematic rather than formulaic.[103] These elements represent what one could call centripetal forces, that is centralising influences. The fact that the alternating sequences do not always link together is a decentralising, centrifugal force.

The internal chronology depends more on *temps quantitatif* than on *temps qualitatif*. The Grail Quest does not act as a redeeming force for the eponymous hero, and is somewhat marginalised from the linearity of the romance. This further reinforces Van Coolput's views quoted earlier regarding the ideology of the *Prose Tristan*. Even the internal *temps quantitatif* displays a tension between centripetal forces and centrifugal forces. Centrifugal forces are manifest in moments of inconsistency and necessary gap filling in the romance, along with frequent shifts in perspective for the audience.

[103] This can also be said of the *Prose Lancelot*.

Gap Filling and Centrifugal Forces

Despite his statements to the contrary, the narrator's control of the account is constantly disruptive and could be construed as subversive, undermining the audience's expectations:

> Cet abandon de la concentration sur une narration linéaire dans laquelle le lecteur et le personnage dont on se trouve suivre le fil partagent les mêmes connaissances ou la même ignorance, tend à attaquer, par un travail de sape pourrait-on dire, les structures d'entrelacement auxquelles les lecteurs du *Lancelot* sont accoutumés.[104]

One area which undermines the narrator's apparent authority is that of gap-filling in the account. Given that there is no precise sequence of narrative units in the *Prose Tristan*, as Kennedy notes, certain narrative situations arise which require the narrator to go back in time in order to explain to the audience how some of the characters come to be there. A good example is found in TLF I. In this instance the scene is set at a fountain where Kaherdin, Palamedés and Lancelot all meet one night.[105] The account had been following Kaherdin's movements, but there had been no recent indication of the actions of Palamedés or Lancelot. Therefore, the narrator is obliged to interrupt the flow of the account, go back in time and explain how they had reached this point and encountered Kaherdin:

> Lancelos sans doute avoit celui soir trouvé Breüs sans Pitié en cele forest meïsmes et mout l'avoit cachié cha et la... Quant Lanselos vit k'il avoit en tel maniere du tout perdu Breüs, il s'en estoit venus a cele fontainne... De Palamidés restoit autresi avenu k'il avoit celui jour trouvee la Beste Glatissant et l'avoit cachie assés longement. Mais au soir l'avoit si du tout perdue k'il n'en savoit ne vent ne voie. Et tout ausi com aventure avoit aporté Lanselot a cele fontainne, ausi i avoit aventure aporté Palamidés.[106]

For a character who plays such an important part in the romance Palamedés' movements are not followed as consistently as one might expect.[107] The narrator

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[104] Kennedy, 'Les Structures narratives', p. 133.
[105] TLF I, pp. 163 ff.
[106] TLF I, p. 164.
[107] Another good example of this occurs in TLF III p. 233. Tristan comes across Palamedés fighting off nine knights single-handedly. The narrator has to take time to explain Palamedés' presence there:

often resorts to gap-filling when he re-enters the narrative thread. This perhaps confirms the alterity of the character of Palamedés: He functions in relation to other characters, inviting contrast and comparison with the rest of the chivalric community.[108]

The explanation of Lancelot's presence still leaves a gap in his movements since his departure from Arthur's court. So the audience cannot rely on the narrator as a reliable source of information despite being assured to the contrary by authoritative interjections. There is a conflict between a centring device to pull the story together and the destabilising, unsettling effect of not being comprehensive and systematic. That the author of the *Prose Tristan* was familiar with and capable of mastering the technique of *entrelacement* there can be little doubt. However, it is clear that there is no intention of employing the technique in a coherent, consistent manner. It is used and abused at will. At the same time as the narrative technique in the *Prose Tristan* authoritatively exploits the interweaving of themes and places to globalise the story of Tristan, lulling the audience into a false sense of security, gaps in the narrative abound, and we cannot rely on explicit formulae to guarantee a change of perspective or adventure. Switches often occur mid-chapter, and chapter divisions are often sequential.[109] This unsettling use of the *entrelacement* formulae persists throughout the romance. It is a use of *entrelacement* which challenges the authority of what has gone before.

As Baumgartner says, this manipulation of time and space, in particular, is inextricably linked to the nature of the romance and its ideology:

> Perspective diachronique, larges coupes synchroniques, tels sont, me semble-t-il, les deux pôles suivant lesquels s'organise pour l'essentiel la

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> Quant Mesire Tristans fu venus sour la bataille et il vit que li chevaliers qui tous seus estoit se combatoir encontre les IX... Et chele bataille estoit conmenchie pour une damoisele que Palamidés conduisoit, que Breüs sans Pitié avoit ochise devant la tour meïsmes.

[108] See Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, p. 176, for a discussion of *entrelacement* in relation to Arthur in the *Prose Lancelot*, where his movements are not constantly reported. Similarly, female characters' threads tend not to be followed through continuously.

[109] Chapters are marked out by the framing formulae involving *li contes,* as explained earlier, see above p. 74, regardless of whether the progression is sequential or alternating.

> représentation du temps dans le *Tristan en prose*. Phénomène hautement prévisible d'ailleurs dans un roman d'aventures où par sa nature même, l'action est soit vécue dans le présent, simultané ou ponctuel, soit orientée vers un futur plus ou moins proche. A de rares instants pourtant, d'autant plus notables qu'ils introduisent une rupture dans un contexte généralement homogène, la démarche s'inverse. Au coeur du présent, le passé, soudain, renaît.[110]

The writing realises in the surface structure the implied deep structure on which the plot rests. This is a novelistic technique characteristic of the *nouveau roman*, which in the twentieth century rejected the well-wrought text of classical or neo-romantic novels.

As the romance progresses, the linearity is suspended more and more often owing to the many digressions. The tale bifurcates in the same way as the paths that the knights follow, and the reader is taken down more than one:

> Autant de détours aventureux, autant de digressions du récit qui... s'égare lui-même dans les multiples méandres des aventures chevaleresques. Comme si cet entrelacs de voies et de chemins traçait aussi celui du conte, puisque, selon une coutume de Logres, là où bifurquent les voies, les chevaliers doivent se séparer, leurs aventures diverger, et donc le récit.[111]

Calin and Calin's article raises some important points with regard to methods of literary criticism applied to medieval texts.[112] They do not claim that courtly romance and the *nouveau roman* are identical but they do suggest:

> ...that the modern reader can apply similar methods or approaches to Chrétien de Troyes, Jean de Meun, Nathalie Sarraute, and Claude Simon, as he can to Rabelais, d'Urfé, Marivaux and Zola.[113]

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[110] Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 270.
[111] Nelly Andrieux-Reix, 'Hautes routes de l'aventure: Les voies et chemins du *Tristan en Prose*', in *Nouvelles recherches*, ed. by Dufournet, pp. 7-31, (p. 30).
[112] Françoise Calin and William Calin, 'Medieval Fiction and New Novel: Some Polemical Remarks on the Subject of Narrative', *Yale French Studies*, 51 (1974), 235-250.
[113] Calin and Calin, p. 235.

They go on to point out many areas of similarity between Courtly Romance and the *nouveau roman*: the myth of the quest, the theme of art and the artist, multiple recurrences, repetition, parallelisms, mutations and antitheses, digressions and *mise en abyme*. The *Prose Tristan* contains many of these aspects, at the same time characteristic of both the aesthetics of its time and of many areas of the aesthetic of the *nouveau roman*. Both of these aesthetics correspond to some of Bakhtin's writings on novelistic discourse as discussed earlier.

Conclusion

The narrative technique in the *Prose Tristan* is complex and defies straightforward categorising. Yet, despite some difficulties, one can perceive elements which would seem to contain the essence of novelness, as put forward by Bakhtin, albeit alongside elements which do not. The narrator displays a surplus of knowledge which surfaces and re-surfaces throughout the romance and places him on a different level from that of the characters, a feature of monologic texts according to Bakhtin. Yet, the same *je*, which is in dialogue with *li contes*, and gives the impression of dominating it for most of the romance, is not unchallenged itself. It was also shown that this authority could be undermined, and *li contes* is able to stake its own claim to authority. If the narrator's presence was established from the beginning, it is *li contes* which has the last word in the romance.[114]

Similarly, there are points in the narrative at which some characters would seem to share in the narrator's prescience. This indicates a certain levelling of the hierarchy between narrator and character.

Furthermore, the passing of time would seem to be represented as *quantitatif* rather than *qualitatif* for the most part. There is a tension between these different chronotopes within the text; tournaments, for example, inject *temps qualitatif* into the narrative, but the fragmented nature of the text's chronology points to a more dialogic and novelistic approach, one which refuses the inherently unifying aim of the narrative

[114] See above p. 115 for reference to the conclusion of the romance, TLF IX, p. 285.

technique in the *Lancelot-Graal.*[115]

The lack of clear authority on the part of the narrator suggests an absence of superior knowledge in a context wider than the plot of the romance, and a refusal of a didactic mode. The undermining of the narrative technique of the *Lanceot-Graal* points to an undermining of its ideology. The *Prose Tristan* has entered into a dialogue with that tradition, inviting comparison and begging to differ. This challenge posed to the pre-existing literary tradition is an important part of literary history. The temptation is to interpret the *Prose Tristan* as rejecting this tradition out of hand. As a dialogic, double-voiced text, the *Prose Tristan* is capable of containing both traditions, and both narrative techniques. They are set up in dialogue, and the audience receives each of them with the dialogising background of the other tradition. The interpolations of the *Lancelot-Graal* must be seen as a two-way process. Reading the *Prose Tristan* will certainly have raised questions and objections; whether or not they are to be upheld by the audience is another matter.

The dialogic exploitation of inter-textuality will be further explored in the next chapter in conjuction with the study of doubling of characters and recurring motifs, which constitute an equivalent dialogism intra-textually.

[115] It will be argued in Chapter Four that the use of recurring motifs throughout the romance creates a certain circularity, which could be defined in terms of *temps qualitatif.*

Chapter Four

Repetition: Doubling and Recurring Motifs

Introduction

There is extensive use of repetition in the *Prose Tristan.* The main manifestation is through doubling/pairing of characters and recurring motifs. The aim of this section is to see how these devices complement the narrative technique highlighted in the previous chapter, and contribute to our overall reading of the work. Repetition was an important feature of all prose romances, as was mentioned above in Chapter Two.[1]

Bakhtin viewed repetition as a feature of novelistic writing, as part of the dialogue of the novel. Each time a phrase or motif is repeated:

> ...its "already-spoken" quality is foregrounded. As it is incorporated into different contexts, passed through different voices, and made to figure in different projected acts..., we detect an "influx of sense" from each hybrid to the next.[2]

Doubling and echoing exist intra-textually within the *Prose Tristan* itself and, also, inter-textually with the *Lancelot-Graal* and the earlier, twelfth-century *Tristan* tradition. We will be examining how these relationships within the text contribute to its ideology. The aim is also to highlight the tension between repetition as a decentralising, centrifugal force which adds to the fragmentation of the text, and repetition as a unifying, centripetal force, as has been claimed for the *Prose Lancelot.* There is a tension between these centripetal and centrifugal forces characteristic of novelness, as identified by Bakhtin. Looking beyond the text, we will try to assess how the use of repetition in the *Prose Tristan* can help us discern how it absorbed and responded to the tradition of the verse *Tristan* and of the *Lancelot-Graal.* We shall begin by looking at the doubling and pairing of characters, before moving on to recurring motifs in the second part of the chapter.

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[1] See above Chapter Two, p. 51.
[2] Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, p. 336.

Doubling/Pairing of Characters

Tristan and Iseut

In the verse redactions of the Tristan legend the emphasis is very much on Tristan and Iseut, inseparable and forever bound up in a fatal love affair, sparked off by the drinking of a love potion. Without abandoning it altogether, the prose romance's emphasis shifts away from this scenario. From the prologue it is quite clear that the *Prose Tristan* will focus mainly on Tristan's career as a knight errant in Logres. He is mentioned alongside Lancelot and Galahad as one of the great knights of the Arthurian era. Despite her prominence in the verse *Tristan* tradition, Iseut does not figure explicitly in the narratorial design of the prose romance as set out in the prologue. In the course of the narrative, as we have seen, once Tristan departs for Logres, she plays an ever-diminishing role in the events of the romance. There are exceptions, such as the sojourn at the *Joyeuse Garde* and the scene of the lovers' death. Even then, the lovers' death is not the end of the romance, as the Quest for the Holy Grail continues and the romance finally ends with Tristan's sword and shield being taken to Arthur's court. This is a surprising gesture, given that Tristan abandoned the Grail Quest in order to rejoin Iseut. Nevertheless, on his death, Tristan's achievements as a knight and his farewell to chivalry take precedence over the tragic end to his love affair with Iseut.

Accordingly, it has to be said, the Iseut of the *Prose Tristan* is a passive disappointment in comparison to the spirited figure from the verse redactions.[3] She has become a possession, symbolising power and rivalry, passing between Marc and Tristan, with little or no apparent influence over her own destiny. Baumgartner extols her strength of character and commitment to Tristan, like the Iseut of the verse

[3] See Pierre Jonin, *Les Personnages féminins dans les romans français de Tristan au XII^e siècle*, Publication des Annales de la Faculté des Lettres, Aix-en-Provence, Nouvelle Série No. 22 (Aix-en-Provence: Ophrys, 1958), p. 10: 'Nous soulignons le rôle joué par les personnages féminins et ce n'est que leur rendre justice. Car ce rôle... est de tout premier plan'. Episodes such as Iseut's quick-wittedness when caught with Tristan unawares in the orchard by Marc, and her resourcefulness in the episode of the ambiguous oath episode in Béroul bear out this comment by Jonin, as does her decision in Béroul to return to Marc of her own will, rather than being snatched as she is in the *Prose Tristan*.

romance.[4] However, despite displaying some of these characteristics, for example in her treatment of Brangain and Kaherdin, the narrative does not develop this. Her status in the Arthurian world depends on her beauty. Objectified and turned into a symbol of power, she no longer appears as an equal actant in the love story.

She is depicted early on in the romance as being immature and unaware of love, rather like the pastoral *ingénue*. She does not perceive the effect she is having on the young knights, Palamedés and Tristan, until it is pointed out to her by Brangain. In what constitutes another deviation from the famous tradition of their exclusive love, as depicted in the verse redaction of the legend, Iseut intimates that she could, at this stage, be won over by Palamedés:

> Se a ce venist qu'il le me covenist faire, je cuit que je m'acorderoie avant a Palamedes por sa bone chevalerie.[5]

There is a shift in the character of Iseut from the verse tradition to the prose romance. Here, it is less that she hates Tristan as the slayer of her kinsman, the Morholt, than that like the heroine of a *roman idyllique,* she is not yet emotionally aware. Subsequently, her response to Brangain's question, as to whom she favours between Tristan and Palamedés, is from the head rather than the heart, based on male values of chivalric worth.

Tristan is attracted to Iseut during his first sojourn in Ireland. For Iseut, as in the verse legend, the love affair does not begin until after drinking the potion. However, some critics argue, the depiction of passion, and hence the power of the potion, is not as absolute in the *Prose Tristan* as in the verse versions of the legend.[6] The love theme is diminished in stature in order successfully to incorporate Tristan into the Arthurian tradition. As Maureen Fries says:

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[4] Baumgartner, *Essai*, pp. 216-223.
[5] Curtis I, p. 165
[6] For further discussion of the love potion see also: Renée Curtis, *Tristan Studies* (Munich: Fink, 1969). pp. 19-23.

> In... the *Prose Tristan* only a small number of adventures cluster around Isolde and in them she shows herself as much under the spell of the Arthurian mystique – and concomitantly less under the spell of the potion – as her love... She measures herself against the Arthurian world and not, as formerly, against the standard of a magical and absolute love.[7]

The *Prose Tristan* is inspired by two related, but ultimately different, strands; it combines the fatal love between Tristan and Iseut depicted in the verse versions of the legend, and the promotion of Tristan as a fully integrated knight of the Round Table. This was bound to pose problems to the author of the *Prose Tristan*, when constructing the characters of Iseut in relation to Tristan the lover and to Tristan the knight of the Round Table. It is one of the many tensions contained within the romance. Kristensen argues that love and chivalry are separated in order to combine the two strands of the *Prose Tristan*:

> En apparence, l'auteur du *Roman de Tristan en Prose* parvient à harmoniser l'amour-passion et la chevalerie, mais, en réalité, il n'évite les conflits entre ces deux domaines antagonistes qu'en les séparant. Si Tristan arrive à briller dans les deux domaines à la fois, c'est justement parce qu'ils sont séparés et que, par conséquent, l'amour n'influence ni en bien, ni en mal sa carrière chevaleresque. Cette solution illusoire nécessite une séparation très nette de la vie privée et de la vie sociale de Tristan et Iseut.... Dans la double vie que mènent Tristan et Iseut, l'amour est sacrifié à la vie sociale. Les intérêts et les jugements de la société féodale déterminent la façon d'agir des amants et constituent ainsi le thème prédominant du roman; l'amour est relégué au second plan.[8]

With the focus being predominantly on Tristan's career as a knight errant in Logres, it is inevitable that Iseut's place in the romance is problematic. She still has her role as healer, established in the verse romance, healing Tristan when he is wounded by the Morholt, and later from his *folie*, following the adventures with Kaherdin. She is unable to heal his fatal wound, inflicted by Marc using Morgain's poisoned lance. The recurring motif of healing will be considered in the second part of this chapter.

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[7] Maureen Fries, 'The Impotent Potion' p. 78.

[8] Vibeke Ostergaard Kristensen, 'L'amour de Tristan et Yseut dans le roman de *Tristan en Prose*: amour fatal ou amour chevaleresque?', *Revue Romane*, 20 (1995), 243-258 (p. 258).

Iseut does not move from one place to another, unless accompanied by either Marc or Tristan. When Tristan is banished from Cornwall and departs for Logres she is depicted looking on sadly from a tall tower.[9] The image of confinement is quite striking, whether she be under Marc's or Tristan's protection. The sojourn at the *Joyeuse Garde* is typical of this, as she has to stay on there, confined to that enclosure, while Tristan is away pursuing adventures. The sojourn at the *Joyeuse Garde* is represented by some critics as an idyllic time for the lovers, and as one of the happier moments, echoing their sojourn in the Morois forest[10]. The sojourn in the forest is, of course, adapted from the verse tradition, and is not a straightforward idyll. It is shot through with the expression of the painful joy and joyous pain of love. The grotto episode which replaces it in Thomas banishes this ambivalence. One could argue that the prose version is rejoining Béroul's tradition against that of Thomas. In another inter-textual echo the *Joyeuse Garde* episode helps to draw Tristan and Iseut even closer to the couple of Lancelot and Guinevere:

> Le château de la *Joyeuse Garde* y devient en effet, dans un épisode important du récit, le *locus amoenus* prêté par Lancelot à son ami et compagnon Tristan et où celui-ci, après avoir échappé à la prison de Marc, emmène Yseut et partage avec elle quelques mois d'un bonheur parfait. Lieu de la joie d'amour vécue dans la jouissance, les plaisirs et *l'envoiseure*, ce qu'elle n'est jamais dans le *Lancelot*, la *Joyeuse Garde* est aussi, dans le *Tristan*, l'espace privilégié de la courtoisie où se croisent, pour admirer la beauté de la reine et discuter d'amour et de prouesse avec les amants de Cornouailles, les *happy few* de l'univers arthurien.[11]

However, this traditional view of the sojourn at the *Joyeuse Garde* can also be challenged and interpreted as further evidence of the problematic nature of Iseut's role and power. She spends far more time alone at the castle than in the company of

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[9] See TLF II, p. 76.

[10] For further discussion of the difference in treatment of the sojourn in the Morois between Béroul's *Tristan* and the *Prose Tristan* see Jean Subrenat, 'La Forêt du Morois: du roman de Béroul au roman de *Tristan en Prose*', in *Tristan-Tristrant: Mélanges en l'honneur de Danielle Buschinger à l'occasion de son 60ème anniversaire*, ed. by André Crépin and Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald: Reineke, 1996), pp. 505-512.

[11] Emmanuèle Baumgartner, 'Gardes et Joyeuses Gardes' in *De l'histoire de Troie au livre du Graal: le temps, le récit (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)*, Collection Varia, 18 (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994), pp. 335-346 (p. 344).

Tristan. As Philip Bennett points out in his article, the motif of the *Joyeuse Garde* can actually be seen as an inversion of abduction myths, where the abduction and liberation of the lady serve to safe-guard the community at large:

> Au lieu d'avoir à retrouver une reine ou une princesse disparue, Tristan enlève lui-même sa maîtresse et l'installe dans un paradis de la courtoisie. Pourtant ce paradis se transforme assez vite en prison dorée pour la reine Iseut, qui languit dans son château tandis que le héros poursuit une carrière chevaleresque qui s'avère à la fin être tout à fait inutile... c'est le roi Marc qui profite de l'absence du héros pour reprendre son épouse. Pourtant, il ne la libère pas; il la ramène dans ce pays infernal, anti-chevaleresque et anti-amoureux, qu'est la Cornouailles pour y faire périr les symboles de l'amour et de la chevalerie.[12]

We conclude, therefore, that the sojourn at the *Joyeuse Garde* is yet another example of the confinement and objectivisation of Iseut in the *Prose Tristan*. This would be more in line with the depiction of this fortress in the *Mort Artu* as a defiant refuge rather than an idyllic retreat.[13]

Despite some parallels and echoing, Iseut's role and position in the narrative of the *Prose Tristan* are not comparable to that of Guinevere in the *Prose Lancelot*. Iseut's role would appear to be far more limited in her relationship with, and effect on, Tristan. Whereas Guinevere is clearly seen to inspire ever greater prowess in her lover, Lancelot, and is responsible through knighting him for starting off his chivalric career, Tristan's quest for greatness can only begin when he leaves Iseut behind in Cornwall.[14]

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[12] Philip Bennett, 'Tristan à la Joyeuse Garde: transmission et réception de la matière tristanienne aux XII[e] et XIII[e] siècles', in *Tristan-Tristrant: Mélanges en l'honneur de Danielle Buschinger*, pp. 25-36 (p. 35).

[13] *La Mort le Roi Artu: roman en prose du XIII[e] siècle*, 3rd edn, ed. by Jean Frappier, TLF, 58 (Genève: Droz, 1964). p. 139 ff.

[14] See Elspeth Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, pp. 49–77, for a study of the love theme in the *Prose Lancelot,* where attention is drawn to the strong link between love and prowess, and the prominence of Guinevere in this domain, albeit only in relation to the situation up to Lancelot's acceptance as a knight of the Round Table and revelation of his name. In later branches of the cycle this love disqualifies Lancelot from success in certain adventures, including the Grail Quest, and leads to trouble in the *Mort Artu*.

Iseut's only public appearance in Logres is at the tournament of Louveserp. Significantly, this takes place in the absence of Guinevere, who is too sick to attend. Thus, the two queens are never brought face to face in the romance. Part of the object of organising tournaments is to bring together the two queens in a sort of beauty contest, parallel to the chivalric rivalry of the companions Tristan and Lancelot. Guinevere's absence could be seen as an echo of Lancelot's absence from similarly organised tournaments in the *Mort Artu*.[15] Whether or not this is the case, the deflection of the rivalry motif back onto the jealous antagonism of Tristan and Palamedés does indeed reinforce the negative view of the love chivalry relationship in the *Prose Tristan*. The tournament at Louveserp will be discussed in more detail under the heading of recurring motifs. Therefore, although comparison is invited between Iseut and the Guinevere of the *Prose Lancelot*, it would seem that they fulfil different roles in relation to the love theme. This is reflected in the approach to love explored in the respective texts. A more pessimistic view of love in the *Prose Tristan* would seem to be emerging in comparison to its predecessor the *Prose Lancelot*, which already shows some signs of questioning in this area.

The two other female characters associated with the love theme are Iseut of Brittany and Morgain. Iseut of Brittany is developed as Iseut of Cornwall's double in Thomas' *Tristan*. The failure of her marriage to Tristan, and her resultant jealousy of the Queen of Cornwall, contribute directly to his death. Her role in the *Prose Tristan* is reduced to only the first part of this equation. In the *Prose Tristan*, once Tristan leaves Brittany and his marriage, he does not return there and she is never again mentioned. The jealousy motif is taken over by Morgain, who, upset at the death of her lover at the hands of Tristan, in a later episode provides Marc with the poisoned spear with which Tristan will be slain. Morgain contributes a strong inter-textual link to the *Prose Lancelot*, from where the issue of her love and hatred for Lancelot is taken over by the narrator of the *Prose Tristan*:

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[15] Lancelot misses the tournaments at Camelot and Taneborc through injury: 'Ne m'en chaut, fet Lancelos, pas tant por moi comme per ce que g'en perdrai a aler a ceste foiz a l'assemblee de Kamaalot; et autresi perdi ge l'autre qui fu l'autre jor a Taneborc par une autre plaie que j'avoie en celui termine.' *La Mort Artu,* ed. by Frappier, pp. 80-81.

> Quant Morgain entent cheste parole, ele souspire de cuer parfont, com chele ki tant haoit Lanselot qu'ele nel pooit oublier. Il n'avoit a chelui tans home u monde qu'ele vausist plus de mal com a Lanselot ne qu'ele haïst plus morteument. Ele le haoit de grant haïne et si l'avoit amé jadis et encore l'amoit, mais che estoit encontre sa volenté meïsmes, pour ce qu'ele l'avoit veü si bel, et si le haoit mortelment pour ce k'il l'avoit refusee.[16]

Even the narrator intervenes to emphasise the inter-textual link provided by Morgain, by referring the audience to the *Prose Lancelot* for an account of Lancelot's time in her prison, to echo the current episode of Tristan in captivity:

> Et ki vaura savoir conment ele le tint en sa prison, si prende le livre de Lanselot, car chil le devise tout apertement, et je nel vous quier pas conter en mon livre pour ce que en autre lieu est devisé.[17]

Tristan and Lancelot

There are obviously strong inter-textual links between the adulterous couples, Tristan/Iseut and Lancelot/Guinevere. If the couple depicted in Chrétien's *Charrette* is based on the Cornish lovers of Béroul and Thomas, and the *Prose Lancelot* couple is a continuation of Chrétien's creation, then, in the *Prose Tristan*, the doubling has come full circle, with Tristan and Iseut being modelled to a certain extent on their famous counterparts in the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle.

In the *Prose Tristan*, Lancelot is very much the serious and established role model to whom Tristan is being compared, and whose example he must follow.[18] The character of Lancelot in the *Prose Tristan* is taken directly from that of the *Prose Lancelot*, with some episodes incorporated verbatim; other moments are invented by the author of the *Prose Tristan*. Debates as to who is the greatest knight abound in the very hierarchical Arthurian universe.[19] These comparisons with Lancelot help

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[16] TLF III, pp. 211-212.
[17] TLF III, p. 208.
[18] Marie-Luce Chênerie, 'Lancelot et Tristan, chevaliers errants', in *Nouvelles recherches,* ed. by Dufournet, pp. 51-78.
[19] See TLF I, pp. 158ff, for one of many discussions on this subject, here, between Hector, Kaherdin

further to incorporate the *Prose Tristan* into the universe of the prose romances. The couple Tristan / Iseut is also compared to the couple Lancelot / Guinevere, the ladies being extolled for their great beauty, the feminine equivalent of knightly prowess. All these references help to seal the inter-textual relationship, which is exploited by the *Prose Tristan* as it intertwines and interlaces with the *Prose Lancelot.* Lancelot and Guinevere are the all-important points of reference for Tristan and Iseut. The double rivalry is a pivotal one for interpreting our romance.[20] There are many differences between the respective couples and these are important pointers to the ideologies and issues explored in the *Prose Tristan.*

Lancelot's love affair as depicted in the *Prose Tristan* is decidedly unproblematic in contrast to Tristan's. The *Prose Tristan* depicts Lancelot and Guinevere, even in the Grail episodes, as if 'frozen' in the state assumed for their love in the early (pre-*Agravain*) sections of the *Prose Lancelot.* This is in stark contrast to the persecution of Tristan and Iseut from the outset, which will lead to Tristan being banished from Cornwall and having to go to Logres, and ultimately to the death of the lovers. Tristan himself points out these differing experiences of love to Lancelot when they meet at the *Perron Merlin*:

> Or sachiés tout chertainnement que Amours est mout diverse a nous deus, car ele est a l'un felenesse et amere outreement, et a l'autre est souef et douce, et fu tous jours. Et vous en avés tout adés toutes les joies et tous les biens que cuers d'omme porroit penser; ele est a moi amer et felenesse si merveilleusement que je n'i trouvai onques granment se dolour non et amertume.[21]

This is not the sort of idea that even enters Lancelot's head in the *Prose Lancelot.* The relationship with Guinevere would seem to be a far more codified one, where the emotions of jealousy and fear may govern them as regards their love to a certain extent, but they do not question its legitimacy or suffer it being questioned by others

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and Guinevere.

[20] See Mario Bastide, 'Conquête et critique du monde arthurien dans le tome I du *Tristan en Prose*', *L'Information Littéraire*, 43 (1991), 3-8, for further discusion of this.

[21] TLF III, p. 283.

in long monologues, nor is there much comment from the author or the tale. There is also a stronger link between love and prowess in the *Prose Lancelot*, although the treatment of the love theme in this text is also not without its complexities.[22] In the *Prose Tristan* the link between love and prowess is developed in relation to Palamedés, whose unrequited love for Iseut is closer to the ideal of *fin' amor* than Tristan and Iseut's relationship. At the tournament of Louveserp he is driven on by his love for her:

> Palamidés se travaille fort, bien fiert de lance et mieus d'espee; mout le fait bien et mout s'en efforce. Quant il regarde vers les loges u il voit madame Yseut tant bele riens et tant avenans que u monde n'a si bele dame, sa force li croist et double; il en vaut miex en toutes guises. Madame Yseut le fait mieus valoir et plus li fait faire k'il ne fust mestiers a son cors.[23]

Tournaments and the misery of love are recurring motifs which we will look at later.

However, Tristan's view that he is unlucky in love is not shared by all characters in the *Prose Tristan*, as will be seen when looking at the character of Palamedés. Indeed many things are relative in the *Prose Tristan*. There would not seem to be a privileged point of reference. Tristan himself, although a main focus, is a complicated matrix of relationships with other characters, his nature changing with each one. He is not a constant and centred figure, but rather multi-centred, as is the text itself. Torn between the demands of absolute love and the absolute nature of chivalry, the multi-faceted character of Tristan is constructed in relation to a number of other characters, in particular male ones. The shift in the importance and characterisation of Iseut has affected the new construction of the character of Tristan himself, in so far as he is now being constructed in relation to his male rivals.

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[22] See Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, p. 49, for fuller details of this argument. See also above, note 14, p. 126.
[23] TLF V, p. 285.

The Multi-Centred Figure of Tristan

During the long periods of separation from Iseut, Tristan is rarely on his own and does not function in isolation. He has a number of travelling companions: friends, rivals and enemies alike. We shall concentrate on his rivalry with Palamedés, his enmity with Marc and his friendship with Dinadan. Indeed it can be argued that the construction of the character of Tristan owes more to his relationships and interactions with these male figures than to his role as the lover of Iseut and his relationship with her. The theme of love would seem to be minimised in the *Prose Tristan*, with homosocial bonding taking precedence over heterosexual love affairs. Tristan's relationships with other knights are based on the intertwined concepts of rivalry and male bonding, as intense as the trials and tribulations of *fin'amor*. This is also a feature of the *Prose Lancelot* at times, for example in the relationship between Lancelot and Galehot.[24]

Tristan and Palamedés

One of the most intense relationships in the prose romance is that between Tristan and Palamedés. This good Saracen knight is an endearing and poignant figure throughout. He appears on the scene very early on, when Tristan first meets Iseut in Ireland. Unlike the eponymous hero, he falls in love with Iseut without the aid of the potion. His love for Iseut is declared prior to Tristan's. It is his love for Iseut which first brings the young princess to the attention of Tristan:

> Ele estoit tant bele et tant avenanz de totes choses que Palamedes, qui la regardoit, en estoit tot esbahiz, et bien dit en son cuer que ce est la plus bele chose que il onques veïst. Si li chiet ou cuer, et tant li plest et atalente qu'il n'est riens ou monde qu'il ne feïst por li avoir, nes sa loi guerpir. Et ce estoit la riens ou monde qu'il feïst plus a enviz, mes totevoies la gerpiroit il por avoir Yselt, s'il poïst estre.
>
> Tant regarde Palamedes Yselt que Tristanz s'en aperçoit, et bien conoist a son semblant qu'il l'aime de tot son cuer. Tristanz avoit mout avant regardee Yselt, et mout li plaisoit, mes son cuer n'i avoit pas mis dusqu'a l'amer granment. Et neporquant, puis qu'il vit que

[24] See Reginald Hyatte, 'Recoding Ideal Male Friendship as *fine amor* in the *Prose Lancelot*', *Neophilologus*, 75 (1991), 505-518.

> Palamedes i entendoit si merveilleusement qu'il dit ou il morra ou il l'avra, Tristanz redit a soi meïsmes que ja Palamedes por pooir qu'il ait ne l'avra. S'il est bons chevaliers, si soit; il en a d'ausi bons par le monde. ...
>
> Ensi entra en orguel et en bobant Tristanz por les amors ma dame Yselt.[25]

This is a negative judgement on Tristan. The use of *orguel* and *bobant* underlines this. It would also constitute a manifestation of Girard's theory of displaced desire, as mentioned above in Chapter Three.[26] What is also highlighted early on is the struggle in Palamedés between faith and love, perhaps an echo of the Saracen Princess in *chanson de geste*, in love with the principal hero. However, significantly for Palamedés, his conversion to Christianity will come at the end of the romance, independently of his love. It can also be read as coinciding with the demise of his worldly quest for Iseut. At this early stage in the rivalry, though, in the context of love, Palamedés is portrayed in a more favourable light than Tristan.

This rivalry in love leads to mortal hatred which endures for most of their chivalric careers:

> Et Palamedes, qui mout estoit apercevant, n'ot pas leanz esté quatre jorz qu'il s'aperçut bien que Tristanz l'amoit et qu'il le haoit mortelment por li. Si ne l'en aime mie mieuz, enz enprent une si mortel haine vers Tristan qu'il ne het orandroit home si mortelment com il fait li, car por ce qu'il le voit si bel chevalier et si bien taillié de toz ses membres, li semble il qu'il li toille l'amor de la demoisele Yselt, et que Yselt l'aint de tot son cuer.
>
> En cele maniere enpris mortel haine Tristanz vers Palamedes, et Palamedes vers Tristan. Yselt ne set riens de tot ce, ne onques ne s'en prist garde, ne ne cuide que nus d'euz l'aint, come celi qui onques n'avoit baé a amors, ne n'i baoit.[27]

From this day forward Palamedés remains single-mindedly devoted to winning Iseut's

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[25] Curtis I, pp. 164-165.
[26] See above p. 62.
[27] Curtis I, p. 165.

heart. The rivalry and hatred between himself and Tristan is also established.

Very early on in the romance, then, it is established that the love of Tristan and Iseut is not an exclusive one, that is before they have drunk the love potion. Nor is Tristan portrayed as the perfect lover at this stage of the romance. When he returns to Cornwall after this initial sojourn in Ireland he takes up with the wife of Seguradés.[28] Palamedés never considers another woman once he has decided on Iseut and, perhaps, emerges as the more worthy *fin amant*. This question of *fin 'amor* will be discussed further in Chapter Five under the heading 'Variety of Discourse'.

As well as being rivals in love Tristan and Palamedés are at times true comrades-in-arms as knights errant in the kingdom of Logres, striving to protect and champion the weak and defenceless of the realm, seeking adventures as they go. They learn to respect each other, and both are prepared to come to the other's rescue in time of need. The love-hate element of their relationship is well represented by an incident where Palamedés rejoices at the prospect of Tristan's execution by an unscrupulous knight, only to intervene at the last minute, overcome with compassion and love for his worthy enemy:

> Mout est Palamidés liés de ces nouveles... Se mesire Tristrans muert a celui point, il se fera crestienner et tant se traveillera puis en courtoisie et em bonté et en valeur et em pris et en honneur que par beles proiieres assuiduelment conquerra les amours ma dame Yseut...
>
> Quant Palamidés voit le samblant de monsignor Tristran, tous li cuers li mue et cange, tel pitié en a en son cuer c'onques pitié n'ot si grant d'aventure qui li avenist. Or dist a soi meïsmes qu'il ne le laira morir...[29]

The favour is returned by Tristan soon after, when he even abandons Iseut at the *Joyeuse Garde* to rescue his friend:

> ...es vous laiens venir un message qui dist a monsigneur Tristran: "Sire,

[28] Another case of male rivalry, with Marc this time, see below p. 138.
[29] TLF VII, p. 198 and p. 200 respectively.

> Palamidés vous salue et vous prie que vous le secourés, car cil du païs u vous le laisastes l'ont emprisonné et encor l'i tiennent. Et, pour ce qu'il ne li est pas avis qu'il ne puisse estre delivrés se par vous non, vous prie il que vous le veigniés secourre." Quant mesire Tristrans ot ceste nouvele, il en est dolans durement et, pour l'amour que il avoit de Palamidés, dist il qu'il se partiroit a l'endemain pour lui secourre et delivrer et si fist il sans faille. En tel maniere demoura mesire Tristrans avoec madame la roïne, si conme je vous ai dit, mais il se departi de la Joiouse Garde pour delivrer Palamidés.[30]

This reciprocity is an important feature of the relationship between Tristan and Palamedés. Their rivalry in the tournaments, which punctuate the account, is intense throughout. This will be further explored when discussing tournaments as a recurring motif. Their mutual respect and admiration as well as their enmity were there from the start. The model of *fin'amor* found in the *Prose Tristan* reflects the world of male rivalry identified by Köhler, for which Girard's model of displaced desire has also been invoked.[31]

Although in some respects Palamedés is portrayed, and considered by other knights, as being inferior to Tristan, it would not be inaccurate to suggest that in some respects he is also portrayed as being superior to him. His steadfastness in love, without the aid of the potion, puts Tristan to shame at the beginning of the romance. And whereas Tristan's main aim, in the latter part of his life anyway, would seem to be earning the respect of Arthur and his knights and being considered the best knight in the world, Palamedés' sole aim in the romance is to win Iseut's heart. As the hero of a love story, the character of Palamedés does not always show Tristan up in a good light. However, as the hero of an adventure story, whose status as hero is confirmed by his love of the supreme lady, Tristan is still ideal. This dichotomy of the hero's role is thus problematised in the *Prose Tristan,* and will be covered when discussing variety of discourse in Chapter Five.

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[30] TLF VII, pp. 382-383.

[31] Eric Köhler, ' Observations historiques et sociologiques sur la poésie des troubadours', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 7 (1964), 27-51.

Tristan may conceal his identity when he first arrives in Logres, but ultimately his aim is to be recognised once his prowess has been displayed publicly. Palamedés displays more humility than his more illustrious rival:

> Or sachiés sire chevaliers, que je sui uns chevaliers errans, non mie de si grant bonté ne de si grant pooir com sont maint autre cevalier. Et se je la verité de mon non vous voeil dire, je vous dirai que on m'apele Palamidés le Mesconneü.[32]

Part of this modesty perhaps stems from the fact that, for most of the romance, Palamedés represents 'otherness' in the chivalric world, a Saracen among Christians. He is thereby excluded from becoming a member of the Round Table and participating in the Quest for the Holy Grail. He is involved in what some have seen as a parallel quest, that for the *Beste Glatissant*. As well as being seen as a mysterious parallel quest to that of the Holy Grail, some have seen it also as an allegory for Palamedés' fruitless quest for the love of Iseut.[33]

Towards the end of the romance, Palamedés, following numerous requests from Arthur and his knights, finally agrees to receive baptism and thereby be eligible for the Round Table and the Grail Quest. This is a cause for great rejoicing at Camelot:

> Mais tant i demoura que li rois et la roïne et tout li baron de la court li priierent qu'il devenist crestiens et compains de la Table Reonde, et tant firent qu'il leur otroia. Li rois fist apeler barons et cevaliers et dames, et le fist vestir ricement de dras d'or et de soie. Quant vint au matin, li rois ala a la maistre eglyse de la Mere Dieu de Kamaaloth. Illuec furent grant compaingnie de barons. Et li rois vint devant le maistre autel o grant baronnie, et Palamidés avoec, a qui il demanda s'il voloit recevoir bauptesme. Il dist: "Sire, oïl!" Quant li rois l'oï, si en ot grant joie. ... Lors fu la joie grant en Kamaaloth, conme se Diex i fust descendus. Lors se parti li rois de l'eglyse o sa compaingnie et enmena Palamidés par la main el palais, a grant joie. Quant il furent tout assamblé, li rois fist

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[32] TLF III, p. 238. The epithet which Palamedés gives himself could be seen to refer to his status as 'other', Saracen, non-Christian which precludes him from becoming a member of the Round Table. Perhaps also it refers to what he perceives as his status as the principal lover in the *Prose Tristan*, which is not fully recognised or respected by other characters in the romance.

[33] See TLF V, pp. 79-84 and for further discussion see J. Traxler, 'Observations on the Bête Glatissant in the *Tristan en Prose*', *Neophilologus*, 74 (1990), 499-509.

aporter les sains et fist jurer a Palamidés tel serement com cil juroient quant il entroient en la compaingnie de la Table Reonde.[34]

Palamedés' inclusion and acceptance into the orthodox Arthurian world are complete.

Significantly, these events occur after Tristan has abandoned the Grail Quest, in order to return to Cornwall and Iseut. He is subsequently marginalised from the Arthurian kingdom and less committed to its ideals than his newly converted rival. After his conversion, Palamedés also ceases to voice his desire for Iseut, as though joining the Quest for the Holy Grail he has turned away from the worldly pursuit of the *Beste Glatissant* and the quest for Iseut's love. Iseut does not figure in his dying discourse. This absence of Iseut from his words could well be due to diplomacy and modesty on his part. He is accompanied by Tristan's close friends Hector and Lancelot, and would not wish to arouse their anger, or provoke them in any way. On the other hand, it could be evidence, once again, that the chivalric bond, a homosocial bond established on shared love, still has preference over the amorous one. If this is the case then one could see that the quest for the *Beste Glatissant* is actually the quest for wordly renown, *fama*, which is achieved by his becoming a member of the Round Table. A corollary of this could be that the impossible quest for Iseut's love has become a double of the quest for the *Beste Glatissant*, which ceases to have significance once membership of the Round Table is gained. This would negate the image of Palamedés as devoted *fin'amant*, but would fit in well with an ideology of which promotes chivalry at the expense of all other ideals.

The manner in which both these heroes meet their respective deaths also raises important questions when considered in parallel. Palamedés is, in effect, martyred to the Christian / Arthurian cause. Slain treacherously by Gauvain and Agravain, his dying words will ensure his salvation as a Christian, and he is accompanied in his final hour by Lancelot and Hector, two of the noblest knights:

"Jhesucrist, fontainne de pitié et de misericorde, aiés merci de moi! Ensi

[34] TLF IX, pp. 249-250.

> conme je t'ai loiaument servi et de boine volenté, puis que je rechui bauptesme, si aiiés vous merci de m'ame, a cestui terme u je vois que n'ai mestier fors la tieue misericorde!... Ha, Mors, pour coi m'es tu si tost sourvenue? Se tu demourasses et atendisses aucun poi, encor quidaisse je estre preudom a Dieu et au monde... Ha, Jhesucrist, peres de pitié, en tes mains conmant je mon esperit!"[35]

This is in stark contrast to Tristan's dying words where God is conspicuous by his absence.[36]

In these dying moments the two knights would seem to have been displaced into different realms. Palamedés is welcomed into the intimacy of Arthur's court and has a Christian death. Tristan has voluntarily exiled himself from Logres and dies a Godless death, dying unrepentant of his sin of adultery.

In another interesting displacement of roles, Tristan behaves towards Palamedés as a *jaloux* does towards his wife's lover, in fact, as Marc behaves towards Tristan. Following his humiliation at the tournament of Louveserp, Palamedés retreats and sings of his love for Iseut. Tristan overhears him and his anger is roused:

> "Palamidés, fait il, cevaliers faus et desloiaus, or connois je bien ta mauvaisitié et ta felonnie. Certes, il te couvient morir, ta daerraine eure est venue! Or ne pues tu plus celer la mauvaisitié de ton cuer: tu penses vilainnes oeuvres envers moi. Ta felonnie te fera morir a cest point. Mout a felonnie en toi et mauvaisitié et traïson, et ta traïson t'ochira!"[37]

Palamedés reply is a more courtly reply than Tristan's vain threats deserve:

> "Mesire Tristrans, dist il, que vas tu disant? Dis tu que je sui mauvais se j'aim la plus bele dame du monde?..."[38]

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[35] TLF IX, p. 268.

[36] See TLF IX, pp. 188-198 for Tristan's death.

[37] TLF VI, p. 101. There is a similar episode in TLF VI p. 321, when Tristan threatens a knight, Hélie, who has just admitted his love for Iseut.

[38] TLF VI, p. 103. This echoes Equitan's justification for loving his seneschal's wife: 'Si bele dame tant mar fust, / s'ele n'amast e dru n'eüst!' in *Equitan*, lines 83-84, Marie de France, *Lais de Marie de France*, traduits, présentés et annotés par Laurence Harf-Lancer, texte édité par Karl Warnke, Lettres Gothiques, 13 (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990), p. 76.

There is a certain amount of cheek in Tristan's comments, given that it is, in fact, his requited passion for Iseut that is treasonable. Furthermore, the irony is that, eventually, he will be the one to die as a direct cause of this. Marc will stab him with the poisoned lance from Morgain, as he is harping a *lai* to Iseut. Palamedés' love for Iseut will never be returned by her and he does not pose a threat to Marc. Tristan's attitude emphasises the strong link between love and possession in the *Prose Tristan*, differing from the *Prose Lancelot* and the verse *Tristan*, with the possible exception of the episode with Kaherdin in Thomas' version.

The theme of displacement is reinforced by the frequent displacement of love into another sphere. Tristan's fortune in love, according to Palamedés, is beyond compare as he enjoys the favour of Iseut:

> Vous cantés de ce que je vois plourant et estes liés de ce dont je me doeil. Et sachiés tout chertainnement que onques en toute vostre vie vous ne veïstes deus chevaliers si malement descordans com entre moi et vous sommes, car de l'aventure d'amours et du pooir ai je tous les maus plainnement et toutes les dolours, et vous en avés tous les biens et toutes les joies.[39]

This is a fortune and joy in love which Tristan considers only Lancelot to enjoy, considering himself wretched in having to deal with the machinations of Marc and with adversity in his relationship in the passage already quoted:

> Or sachiés tout chertainnement que Amours est mout diverse a nous deus...[40]

This constant displacement of the joys or misery of love into another sphere does not occur as frequently in the *Prose Lancelot*. The motif of misery in love is explored in the agony of Galehot, and on a couple of occasions this misery is also projected onto

[39] TLF III, p. 193.
[40] TLF III, p. 283.

Lancelot.[41]

Palamedés' role as lover in the romance will be discussed further in the next chapter when looking at the discourse of love. He also represents an important aspect of the portrayal of misery in love, a recurring motif throughout the text. Palamedés is paired with Tristan throughout the text, and, as we have seen, he often shows the latter up in a less than favourable light. He also provokes a dynamic redefinition of the relationship inherited from the ancient legend, of rivalry between Tristan and Marc, for the affections of Iseut.

Tristan and Marc

The character of Marc is the one from the verse redactions of the Tristan legend to have undergone the most significant changes.[42] Critics have argued that the complex portrayal of a king and husband, tormented by jealousy and rage towards the two people he loves most, has mutated into a stereotypical *jaloux* figure, the villain of the piece:

> ...in the thirteenth-century prose romance of Tristan the original dichotomy of the tale of magic and the tragic tale of feudal loyalty will be resolved: Mark will become a villain and a traitor, and Tristan the hero, the legitimate champion of Iseult and of pure, triumphant chivalry.[43]

Indeed, Marc's treachery and inherent badness are brought to light very early on in the romance when he kills his younger brother who dared criticise his cowardice in refusing to challenge the Irish over the costly tribute paid to them each year, in

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[41] See *Lancelot en Prose,* ed. by Micha, 9 vols, I, pp. 388-389 and *Lancelot do Lac: The Non-Cyclic Old French Prose Romance*, ed. by Elspeth Kennedy, 2 vols (Oxford, Clarendon, 1980), I, p. 612, for Galehot's death from misery in love. Lancelot himself goes mad through misery in Micha VI, when Guinevere, furious at his night with the Fisher King's daughter which led to the conception of Galahad, banishes him from her presence. He is cured by the Grail, p. 224. His earlier period of madness is caused by separation from the queen, Micha VIII pp. 452-459, and he is cured by the Lady of the Lake, who does not oppose the love. This is not so much displaced as conflicting presentations of the love of Lancelot. Galehot's love for Lancelot and separation from him kills him; Lancelot's love for Guinevere and separation from her sends him mad.

[42] For a discussion of Béroul's Marc see, Diana Tyson, 'Some Thoughts on the Character of King Marc in Beroul's *Tristan*', *Annuale Mediaevale*, 20 (1980), 67-75.

[43] Eugène Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance*, pp. 51-52.

particular since their own sister was lost in this way:

> Quant Pernehan vit que sa seror aloit en estrange terre en servaige, il dist au roi Marc: "vos nos avez honiz par vostre mauvestié. Si cest reaume vos remenoit longuement, encores i feriez vos pis. Mes il ne vos remandra mie, car je le vos osterai des mains".
>
> Li rois Mars ot paor et dotance de ceste parole, car il savoit que ses freres estoit bons chevaliers, et tant amez de ces de Cornoaille que tost li poïst grever, s'il vosist.
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> ...Li rois ... comença a regarder son frere irieement, car il li sovint de la parole qu'il li avoit dite. Si met la main a l'espee, et li cort sus sanz desfier, et li done parmi le chief; et la ou il li criot merci, l'ocist.[44]

This is the first of many occasions when Marc's cowardice and treachery are emphasised in the course of the romance by the narrator. Marc has traditionally been seen by critics as the antithesis of chivalry in the *Prose Tristan*, the antithesis of the character of Tristan, the *meilleur chevalier du monde*. If we look more closely at the portrayal of Marc and his relationship to Tristan, it would appear that the dichotomy of good and evil is not as clear-cut as most have maintained it to be.

The rivalry between uncle and nephew in love does not begin over Iseut, as in the verse redactions, but over the episode concerning the wife of Seguradés. Following Tristan's first return from Ireland, they are both having an affair with another knight's wife at the same time. As if to pre-figure the nature of their subsequent involvement with Iseut, Tristan usually has the upper hand in their competition for her affections. It is not an episode which flatters either Marc or Tristan.

> ...mes il (Tristan) dotoit son oncle, car il avoit ja tant apris qu'il savoit vraiement qu'il amoit la dame, et qu'il le haoit por cele dame meïsmes.[45]

It is also significant that Tristan has already met Iseut at this point, and therefore has

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[44] Curtis 1, pp. 130-131.
[45] Curtis I, p. 188.

forsaken her for another:

> Et Tristanz ama li sanz faille si durement qu'il ne li sovient mes d'Yselt la Bloie. Il met Yselt arrieres dos et oblie dou tout por ceste, et ceste oblie totes genz por li.[46]

This is the second occasion when Tristan's love for a woman is presented in terms of rivalry with a male counterpart. First Palamedés in Ireland and now Marc back in Cornwall. It is only once he has drunk the potion that Tristan falls in love again with Iseut. Marc, like Palamedés, does not need the aid of the potion to fall in love with Iseut:

> Li rois Mars, qui tant la vit bele qu'il n'avoit onques veüe sa per, est si eschaufez de s'amor qu'il voit bien qu'il ne se porroit pas longuement consirrer de li. Lors dit qu'il ne veust mie que les noces targent.[47]

Marc and Tristan's rivalry had been established over the feud for the wife of Seguradés, and Marc also was wary of Tristan's prowess and popularity with the Cornish people. It is clear that even before he is aware of the affair between Tristan and Iseut, he fears and hates his nephew. He had hoped he would be killed in the quest for Iseut in Ireland, and is disappointed on hearing of their arrival:

> "Sire, Tristanz est venuz au port entre li et ses compaignons, et sachiez qu'il vos amoine Yselt la Bloe, la fille au roi Anguin d'Yrlande." Quant li rois Mars entent ceste parole, il en est mout correciez, car Tristan ne queïst il jamés veoir, car il n'avoit home ou monde que li tant dotast com Tristan, et por ce li voloit il trop grant mal.[48]

When Tristan and Iseut's adultery can no longer be ignored, they are denounced by Marc's other nephew, Audret. The animosity between Marc and Tristan increases as a result. On more than one occasion Marc threatens to kill Tristan but always relents - against the advice of Audret. A notable example comes at the end of the first part of Tristan's biography when he allows Tristan to be brought back to court to be healed

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[46] Curtis I, p. 178.
[47] Curtis II, p. 92.
[48] Curtis II, p. 91.

of his *folie* by Iseut. In this instance Marc lacks the ruthlessness which characterises him in other sections.

> Mout fu li rois March dolans et courechiés de grant maniere quant il reconnut que che estoit Tristrans ses niés ki ensi estoit alés a mal et a dolour pour les amours de madame Iseut. Que vous diroie je? Tant tint li rois March son neveu en ses cambres et tant en fist prendre grant cure a la roïne meïsmes et as autres que mesire Tristrans gari de cele forsenerie k'il avoit, ki auques longement l'avoit tenu. Quant il fu garis de cele forsenerie et revenus en son sens et en sa biauté et en sa forche et il sot k'il estoit entre les mains le roi March, de qui il ne se pooit partir sans sa volenté, il fu tant durement dolans et coureciés que, s'il eüst armes dont il se peüst ochire, ochis se fust a celui point sans faille.
>
> Quant mesire Tristrans fu garis, li rois March le fist puis revenir devant lui et li fist jurer sour sains k'il s'en iroit dedens .XII. jours hors de Cornuaille ne jamais n'i retourneroit a nul jour.[49]

Later Marc wishes he had disposed of Tristan when he had the chance but it is too late. Whether Marc's mercy is due to pity or cowardice is not certain. He is certainly aware of the people's affection for his nephew; there is also evidence, especially at the end of the romance, that he did in fact love Tristan, but was unable to cope with the jealousy and rage which the rivalry over Iseut inspired:

> ...il [Marc] en a pitié à son cuer et ne se puet tenir qu'il ne di ausi conme en plourant: "Certes, ce est damages de la mort monsigneur Tristran, que jamais, a mon escient, ausi boin cevalier ne sera el monde com l estoit. Et s'il ne se fust si desloiaument menés vers moi com il se menoit, on le peüst prisier de toutes coses, sour tous cevaliers!"[50]

According to some, the character of Marc in the *Prose Tristan* may seem to lack the depth of the character in the verse redactions, but he is nevertheless endowed with a complexity proper to this version of the legend.

The character of Marc is very much intertwined with that of Tristan in the prose romance, perhaps even more so than in the verse redactions of the legend. There are

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[49] TLF I, p. 276.
[50] TLF IX p. 189.

many noticeable parallels between the two characters, most apparent in their amorous rivalry for the wife of Seguradés and subsequently for Iseut. Another shift in the prose romance is the depiction Marc as 'lover', suffering from an anguish and agony with which the figure of 'the husband' is not usually endowed.[51] Doubling with Tristan in the role of lover, Tristan subsequently doubles with Marc in the role of husband, as we have just seen in his exchange with Palamedés.

In conjunction with doubling, there is also an interesting mirroring in their relationship with Arthur and the kingdom of Logres. Following his banishment from Cornwall at the end of TLF I, at the beginning of volume II ,Tristan ventures into Logres in order to earn his seat at the Round Table and to make his name in the world of chivalry. He does so by achieving various adventures, saving Lancelot's life along the way, triumphing at the tournament of the *Château des Pucelles*, finally being brought to the court by Lancelot following a fierce single combat at the *Perron Merlin*.

During the period which elapses between Tristan's triumph at the tournament and his single combat with Lancelot, Tristan is the object of a quest solemnly sworn by Lancelot and nine other members of Arthur's entourage. Some of these knights decide to seek Tristan in Cornwall, assuming that he will have returned there to be with Iseut. He is in fact being held in prison by Daras along with Palamedés and Dinadan. While Tristan is being sought out to be properly honoured in Logres, an opportunity is exploited for a comic interlude of adventures which ridicule Marc and Audret, providing further proof of their treachery. The adventures include Gaheriet, Yvain and Kay in Cornwall. They arrive at a time when the Cornish court and people are celebrating the anniversary of the victory over the Morholt; a victory, of course, secured personally by Tristan. In the course of the Logres knights' stay there are hints of Marc's obvious strength. He defeats Yvain in single combat. This could be read as another subtle attack on the notion of superiority of Logres knights over the

[51] For example, ' Et sachiez qu'il [Marc] amoit madame Yseut de si tres grant amour k'il ne savoit mie tres bien lequel il amoit mieus a perdre, u madame Yseut u toute sa tere.', TLF IV, p. 69. 'Autre riquece il ne demande fors Yseut: cele li est joie, cele li est vie et santé et confort en toutes coses.', TLF IX, p. 147

Cornish:

> Au roi March avint adonc bien de chele jouste, car il ne fu navrés ne blechiés, ne de la sele il ne caï. Mesire Yvains ne s'em puet pas ensi loer, ains s'en doit plaindre durement, car il fu navrés d'un glaive en mi le pis si em parfont que poi s'en fali que li glaives ne passa outre d'autre part.[52]

However, this sequence of events is not related as being straight-forward. Marc is relieved to find that he has not actually killed his opponent. Not only would it have been homicide, but homicide against a knight to whom he was supposed to be offering hospitality. It also results in Marc getting an undue sense of his own prowess just because he happens, by luck, to have won this joust:

> Des ore mais se vait il plus prisant k'il ne soloit. Chestui fait et ceste aventure on mis son cuer en grant orgoeil et em beubant si grant k'il en emprendra si haut fait k'il s'en tenra pour fol en la fin et pour caitif. ...Adont se tenist il em pais! Mais cheste boine aventure ki avenue li estoit le fait forsener et foloiier.[53]

The luck of the Logres knights does not improve as Kay is subjected to dubious hospitality by the king. Marc proceeds to dupe Kay with the story of the *Lac Aventureux,* where, he claims, Kay can return at night to be challenged by a mysterious knight. Buoyant after his victory over Yvain, Marc does this with a view to humiliating Kay in combat. However, Gaheriet suspects Marc of foul play and accompanies Kay. Even so, Marc unseats Kay, further proof of his strength:

> Li rois March, ki fors cevaliers estoit, ensi com je vous ai conté autre fois, le fiert si durement en son venir k'il le porte a la tere mout felenessement, si que Kex gist illeuc une grant pieche, si estourdis durement de celui caoir k'il ne set s'il est u nuis u jours.[54]

However, he and Audret emerge battered and bruised by Gaheriet for their troubles. They return to court shamed by their exploits:

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[52] TLF III, pp. 124-5.
[53] TLF III, p. 126.
[54] TLF III, p. 153.

> Li rois March s'en entre en sa cambre, iriés et courechiés et dolans de grant maniere. Mout est plus dolans k'il ne seut. Il fait a lui venir les mires au plus coiement k'il onques puet, car il ne vausist pas volentiers, s'il peüst, que chil de son ostel seüssent conment il estoit navrés ne en quel maniere il li estoit avenu.[55]

In an interesting parenthesis, there is, perhaps, the only sign of interest or affection manifested by Iseut towards her husband in the whole romance. She wishes to find out how he is:

> Quant la roïne entent et ot que li rois est si deshaitiés, ele le veut aler veoir pour savoir conment il se sentoit. Et chil ki la cambre gardoient ne le laissent laiens entrer, ains li dient tout plainnement: "Dame, ne vous poist ore mie, vous ne poés chaiens entrer a ceste fois. Li rois a desfendu que nus ne nule n'entre chaiens. Il ne veut ore estre veüs." La roïne est toute esbahie quant ele entent ceste novele, car onques mais n'estoit avenu, puis qu'ele vint en Cornuaille premierement, que la cambre le roi li fust contredite pour nule aventure de monde. Ele ne set qu'ele doie penser de ceste cose. Si s'en retourne adonc en sa cambre, ausi com toute esbahie de cheste aventure.[56]

Iseut is preoccupied by Marc's mysterious indisposition for two weeks:

> Mais bien sachiés que la roïne, ki trop durement se merveilloit pour coi li rois estoit si enclos, vint tant enquerant et par soi et par autrui, et demandant quele maladie li rois avoit... La roïne vait moust pensant dont ce puet estre venu, mais ele n'i set tant penser qu'ele le puisse savoir, si s'en tient a mout nonsachant.
>
> Mout vait demandant la roïne as uns et as autres u ce puet estre fait et dont ce puet estre venu...[57]

She is eventually informed of events by Dinas. When she does eventually learn about what has happened she is not impressed by her husband's behaviour:

> Quant la roïne entent cest conte, ele respont tout maintenant: "Dix, fait

[55] TLF III, p. 161.
[56] TLF III, p. 162.
[57] TLF III, p. 163.

> ele, qu'en dirom nous? Com li rois March met adés sa pensee et sa cure en faire cruauté et vilonnie as cevaliers estranges que aventure amainne en Cornuaille! Chertes, s'il encore l'en mescaoit durement en tel maniere k'il l'en couvenist chierement repentir, che ne seroit mie trop grant merveille, anchois seroit a boin droit k'il l'en mescaïst durement!"[58]

Therefore, as Tristan progresses towards glory in Logres, Marc invites ignominy in Cornwall. It cannot be denied that the above adventures do nothing to enhance Marc's character or reputation. Despite his winning jousts against Arthur's knight, a theme is developed that for Marc victory leads to shame. Even so, there are suggestions of the presence of qualities which give Marc potential for being better. He can hold his own in combat with knights such as Yvain and Kay from Arthur's kingdom, but lets himself down by trying to steal an unfair advantage. The passage also allows a rare glimpse of Iseut's concern for him. Rather than symbolising absolute evil is Marc not more an example of good qualities later perverted, or perhaps Tristan's shadow, symbolising the darker side of the hero's psyche, as also displayed by Tristan in his jealousy towards Palamedés and Kaherdin.

The term shadow is being used in Jungian terms as explained by H. L. Philip, where he defines it in the glossary as being 'The unrecognised and usually unwelcome aspects of our unconsciousness'.[59] He then glosses Jung's explanation of the term, along with references to literary examples:

> A characteristic of the shadow is that it is constantly experienced in a personified form which might be expected of one of the prominent archetypes... Writers have often dealt with the theme of the shadow; favourite illustrations are Shakespeare's Caliban, R. L. Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein and Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray.
>
> The contents of the shadow may be classified in the following manner:
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> 1. All that we have repressed into the personal unconscious, without reflection of any kind...

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[58] TLF III, p. 164.
[59] H. L. Philip, *Jung and the Problem of Evil* (London: Rockliffe, 1958), p.260.

> 2. All that which we have refused to countenance or even recognise as a real part of ourselves...
>
> 3. There is one other type of material which may be found in the shadow: those good qualities which are pushed into the background when the evil ones find too prominent a place in life.[60]

According to these criteria there is a case for seeing Marc as Tristan's shadow, or even vice versa, in particular in the roles of husband and lover. This would imply that Tristan is not a paragon of good, but has potential to be corrupted, for example, by jealousy. Similarly Marc is not a paragon of evil, but has potential to be redeemed.

Further evidence of this shadowing is provided in the next instalment of adventures involving Marc, which mirror Tristan's movements to an uncanny degree. Following Tristan's renown, which has spread throughout Britain and reached the ears of the King of Cornwall, Marc fears his nephew returning to rob him once more of his wife and then of his kingdom. At the start of volume IV he decides to venture into Logres in order to track Tristan down and kill him. In contrast to Tristan's glory trail, Marc's aims from the outset are treacherous, and yet are described by the narrator in terms of potential goodness perverted, rather than absolute evil:

> ...et sachiés que li contes tesmoigne tout plainnement que li graindres hardemens que li rois March fesist en toute sa vie, si fu chis que de venir de Cornuaille u roiaume de Logres pour metre a mort le mieudre chevalier du monde. Ichil fais ne fu pas hardement, ains fu ausi conme forsenerie et rage.[61]

Nevertheless, the narrator does explicitly describe his undertaking as *forsenerie et rage*, which confirms the above-mentioned theme of Marc's victories bringing shame. In the case of Marc all values can be inverted. These sentiments associated with Marc are not unlike Tristan's *orguel* and *bobant* when faced with Palamedés. However, unlike Tristan, who, as we have seen, does indeed fulfil his aim, Marc's mission is doomed to fail. He ends up at Arthur's court but brings disgrace upon

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[60] Philip, pp. 92-93.
[61] TLF IV, p. 69.

himself and upon the custom of judicial combat in the process. He is brought back to the court by Lancelot as a villain and forced to reveal his identity and confess his crimes. This ignominy is in stark contrast to the aura of greatness and virtue surrounding Tristan when he is brought to court by Lancelot following their single combat at the *Perron Merlin*. However, if we consider more carefully the way in which Tristan arrives at Arthur's court it can also be seen as an oddly perverted parallel to Marc's victory, although guilty, in a judicial combat. Indeed, Tristan gains entry to the Round Table by fighting the wrong knight, Lancelot instead of Palamedés, in what was originally a bad cause.

The mirroring is reinforced by the fact that Dinadan is the first companion for both Tristan and Marc . In both cases they embark on a series of adventures which have comic overtones, ultimately ending in glory for Tristan and ignominy for Marc . We will discuss these series of adventures shortly when looking at Dinadan's character and role in the romance.

Marc is a prominent protagonist in TLF IV, and his deeds and actions have repercussions on the entire Arthurian world. When he does eventually arrive at Arthur's court to defend his name in judicial combat there is an interesting reversal of convention. The audience knows that he is guilty of the crime of which he is being accused and yet before our eyes and ears he acquits himself against Arthur's champion, Armant:

> Et ja fust il ensi toutesvoies que Armans se combatist pour loiale querele et pour droituriere, car bien estoit verités que li rois March avoit ochis Bertholais, et mauvaisement, si fu Armans vaincus de chele bataille. Et puis fu il recordé que cele bataille fu la premiere ki onques fust vaincue par tort en la maison le roi Artu.[62]

This combat may be yet another detail to demonstrate the flaws in Marc's character, but it also serves to raise more questions about the legitimacy and assumed wisdom of the Arthurian world. There is a gradual erosion of respect as the romance progresses.

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[62] TLF IV, p. 163.

In this instance it is only through the intervention of Lancelot that the truth of the matter is established:

> Quant li rois March ot sa bataille vaincue, ensi com je vous cont, il se parti tout maintenant de la court, k'il ne vaut dire son non ne au roi Artu, ne a autre... Tout maintenant se mist Lanselos a la voie, après le roi March, et tant fist k'il l'ataint en la forest et illuec le conquist... Et toutes voies le fist il retourner a court, vausist ou non.[63]

This kind of situation is reminiscent of incidents which occur in Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances, where Arthur's judgement is questioned, as well as certain existing customs.[64]

The absolute nature of chivalry is a phenomenon which is constantly questioned throughout the romance, first by Kaherdin and later by Dinadan. Is its wisdom truly valid? If the ideals that Tristan represents and upholds are questionable, so too must his behaviour be. Indeed, rather than being an anti-hero or the antithesis of Tristan, is Marc not more a shadow, a shadow which can be identified with and embodies the darker side of the eponymous hero? Tristan himself compares unfavourably to Palamedés in the realm of devotion to Iseut, and assumes Marc's role of *jaloux* in relation to Palamedés and Kaherdin. He is not an exemplary lover, nor a paragon of virtue.

As this interesting sequence of adventures continues, Arthur, rather naïvely, orders Marc and Tristan to be reconciled and to return together to Cornwall. Marc swears solemnly to treat Tristan well on their return to Cornwall:

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[63] TLF IV, pp. 163-164.

[64] See, for example, Donald Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). In this book, looking at the observance and breaking of customs in Chrétien's romances, Maddox describes Arthur as 'a personage whose characteristics include stasis, passivity, even anguish... We may infer that a monarchy founded on custom and the active communal solidarity of the vassals, perhaps not problematic at its inception during the reign of Utherpendragon, has since become so, because of a radical shift in the mentality of the court, whose warrior elite seek an independent status and identity.' (p. 32).

> "...Je vous requier, ce dist li rois, que vous monsigneur Tristran, vostre neveu, enmenés avoec vous en Cornuaille et la li faites tant d'ounour com on doit faire a si preudonme et a si boin chevalier com il est, car je vous di vraiement que che est sans faille li mieudres chevaliers qui soit orendroit en chest monde – Chertes sire, fait li rois Marc, tout che ferai je volentiers."[65]

As a result of Tristan and Marc's departure there is a return to the initial situation of the Cornish love triangle. Most of the members of Arthur's court have misgivings about entrusting Tristan to Marc's care. From Marc's point of view, he should be wary of Tristan and Iseut being in close proximity, and of Tristan's popularity with the Cornish people. Indeed, the first reports of Tristan's well-being in Cornwall would seem to confound the suspicions of Arthur and his knights, while confirming Marc's worst fears:

> Quant Fergus l'ot une grant pieche escouté il li dist: "Sire, or sachiés tout chertainnement que mesire Tristrans est sains et haitiés en Cornuaille, ne je nel vi onques en ma vie si joiant ne si lié qu'il ne soit orendroit encore plus. Que vous diroie je, sire? Il est sires de Cornuaille autretant u plus com est li rois March proprement, et plus i est il redoutés.[66]

Of course, Marc does eventually go back on his oath and he imprisons his nephew. However, this only occurs after his humiliation following the public performance of the *Lai Voir Disant*. Marc suspects Tristan of being responsible for this. One could therefore argue that Marc is provoked into imprisoning Tristan. He has to act in order to protect his sovereignty in Cornwall, with regard to possession of Iseut, and public respect. In another recurring motif, Tristan will outwit Marc by escaping from his prison, take Iseut with him to Logres and leave Marc imprisoned in his own dungeon.

As before, Marc will eventually follow Tristan into Logres one more time. His aim, once more, is to seize Iseut back. This time it will be from the *Joyeuse Garde*, where she is left, while Tristan is participating in the Grail Quest. Forging an alliance with

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[65] TLF IV, p. 220.
[66] TLF IV, pp. 250-251.

the Saxons he also seizes the opportunity of the Grail Quest to attack Arthur's court. Marc has the opportunity to defeat Arthur in single combat:

> Li rois March estoit de grant force, si empaint le roi Artu si merveilleusement qu'il l'abat a tere, et au retraire brisa li glaives si que li rois Artus remest tous enferés.[67]

He will eventually fail to take control of Arthur's kingdom, due to the intervention of Galahad, but he is content with the prize of Iseut and returns happily to Cornwall. The depiction of the married couple's return is poignant, with pain experienced on both sides:

> Toutes les fois qu'il resgarde madame Yseut, il oublie toutes ses pertes. Ne li en chaut se poi non, puis qu'il a Yseut recouvree. Ce est ses confors, c'est ses delis, c'est sa joie et ses soulas. Autre riquece il ne demande fors Yseut: cele li est joie, cele li est vie et santé et confort en toutes coses. Mais pour ce, s'il a le cors en sa baillie, n'a il mie le cuer. Li cuers n'est pas en Cornuaille, conment que li cors i demeure. Li cuers est en grant dolour et en tristrece. Bien le puet apercevoir li rois March, car il n'est gaires heure que la roïne Yseut ne pleure... dont il est merveille qu'ele puet tant plourer et tant jeter larmes conme ele rent, car sans faille la viande est avant moullie qu'ele le menjuce ne met em bouce... Et quant li rois March voit chaoir les lermes, souvent en a males paroles et mal samblant et male ciere. Il en a le cors seulement, et que vaut li cors d'une dame morte? Quant autre soulas n'en a fors qu'il le voit plorer, conment si puet il se reconforter? Il l'aimme tant que por mauvais samblant qu'ele face, il ne le puet onques amer mains. Il l'aimme si de tout son cuer qu'il n'aimme Dieu ne home ne or ne argent autretant, ne tere ne roiaume. Cele aimme ne autre plus el monde, cele est tout ses soulas et toute sa vie.[68]

It is Tristan's turn to follow Marc, this time back to Cornwall. As, in the end, he does also prize Iseut above all other things, he abandons the Grail Quest and life in Logres in order to be with her once more in Cornwall:

> Si demeura mesire Tristrans trois jours et laissa laiens Hector et s'em parti, et dist que des ore mais vauroit il cevaucier vers Cornuaille, car assés avoit demouré el roiaume de Logres et tant i avoit perdu que jamais

[67] TLF IX, p. 75.
[68] TLF IX, pp. 147-148

cele perte ne quidoit recouvrer.[69]

Inevitably, Tristan and Iseut's adultery recommences; only this time, once they are denounced, Marc does not take pity on his nephew:

> Or dist li contes que un jour estoit entrés mesire Tristrans es cambres la roïne et harpoit un lay qu'il avoit fait. Audret l'entend et le vint conter au roi March, si fist puis tant qu'il feri monsigneur Tristran d'un glaive envenimé que Morgain li ot baillié. Mesire Tristrans estoit desarmés, si que li rois le feri mortelment par mi la quisse, et quant li rois ot fait cestui caup, il s'em parti, car il n'osa monsigneur Tristran atendre. Quant mesire Tristrans se senti feru, il connut bien qu'il estoit ferus a mort.[70]

Tristan is wounded, symbolically in the *quisse*; there is either a Grail connection, with an echo of the wound of the Roi Mehaingnié, or a reference to the sin of his adultery. Not all manuscripts locate his wound there. In some versions he is stabbed in the back, in the spine.[71]

Initially, Marc will not even allow Iseut to go and see Tristan on his sick bed. Significantly he is deprived of her healing touch. The King is jubilant, but when he learns of the gravity of Tristan's wounds, and the extent of his suffering, he repents of this misdeed. There would seem to be an echo of the wounds received at the hands of the Morholt, an echo perhaps not completely lost on Marc, as he remembers what his nephew has done for him in the past:

> Et au daerrain, quant on li conta conme anguisseuse fin mesire Tristrans mainne, et conme il est del tout changiés que nus nel reconoist, tant estoit empiriés, il en a pitié a son cuer et ne se puet tenir qu'il ne die ausi conme em plourant: "Certes, ce est damages de la mort monsigneur Tristran, que jamais, a mon excient, ausi boin cevalier ne sera el monde com il estoit. Et s'il ne se fust si desloiaument menés vers moi com il se menoit, on le peüst prisier de toutes coses, sour tous cevaliers!"
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> Quant li rois sot certainnement, par ciaus qui l'aloient veoir, que mesire Tristrans aloit a fin, adont se conmencha a repentir de celui fait et dist que

[69] TLF IX, p. 186.
[70] TLF IX, pp. 187-188
[71] TLF IX, p. 295 gives the variant reading of the other Version II manuscripts as 'parmi l'eschine'.

de ceste mort venroit encore grans max. Or se repent durement. Or vauroit il qu'il ne l'eüst mie fait.[72]

Tristan forgives Marc on his deathbed:

> Quant mesire Tristrans vit qu'il ne poroit plus durer se petit non, il dist a Dynas: "Mandés le roi March! Jel verroie volentiers et li mande qu'il viengne a moi parler, ains que je muire. Je ne li sai pas si mauvais gré de ma mort com je fai a Audret...." Dynas manda esranment au roi qu'il venist. Li messages vint a Tintajol, qui conta au roi March ces nouveles. Quant li rois ot ce, il conmence a plorer mout fort. Il baisse la teste et dist si haut que cil qui illeuc estoient l'entendirent: "Ha, las, conme j'ai mal fait, qui mon cier neveu ai ochis, le meilleur chevalier du monde! Je ai toute cevalerie honnie!"[73]

There is no denying that much is made of Marc's weaknesses in the *Prose Tristan*. Yet it can be claimed that it is precisely weakness rather than inherent evil which makes the character behave as he does. The doubling which takes place between himself and Tristan, as lovers of Iseut and travellers in Logres, serves to bring them closer together.

As well as the notion of the shadow, the idea of doubling can also have sinister connotations in Freud's theories, as discussed by Toril Moi in her article about doubling in Thomas' *Tristan*. She says of Freud:

> In his essay on "The Uncanny" (1919), he explicitly relates the figure of the double to the death drive. The double "appears in every shape and in every degree of development", Freud writes. But whatever its specific characteristics it is the result of division or splitting on the one hand and repetition on the other...[74]

Moi goes on to discuss how the doubles in Thomas' *Tristan*, Iseut of Brittany and Tristan the Dwarf, go on to become:

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[72] TLF IX, p. 189.
[73] TLF IX, p. 191.
[74] Moi, 'She Died', p. 119.

...harbingers and instruments of death in the course of the poem. Otto Rank succinctly summarises the dual aspect of this kind of double:

> So it happens that the double, who personifies narcissistic self-love, becomes an unequivocal rival in sexual love; or else, originally created as a wish-defence against a dreaded eternal destruction, he reappears in superstition as the messenger of death[75].

If we see Marc and Tristan as doubles in the *Prose Tristan*, it perhaps makes sense for Marc to be so instrumental in Tristan's death. Similarly, if Morgain's jealousy and resentment of Tristan make her a sort of double of Iseut of the White Hands of the verse tradition, it is equally fitting that she should have provided the murder weapon to Marc.

In conclusion, then, contrary to what most commentators have claimed, Tristan and Marc do not represent a dichotomy of good and evil in the *Prose Tristan*. There is good and bad in both. As characters, they merge and overlap, interacting in what can be described a dialogic relationship.

Kaherdin and Dinadan

The figure of Kaherdin is known from the verse *Tristan*, and here doubles with Tristan, Palamedés and Marc as yet another knight who falls in love with Iseut. His story is an important example of misery in love in the romance. This motif will be discussed later, and the lyrics he composes when dying from love will be looked at in Chapter Five.

His other main role in the romance, which emerges towards the end of his life, is to question the chivalric customs of Logres. In a conversation with Palamedés, who does not question the nature of his life as a knight errant, he forcefully expresses his reservations about the ways of Logres:

> Je reni ci endroit les aventures deu roiaume de Logres. Gardés les bien, je

[75] Moi, 'She Died', p. 120 and Otto Rank, *The Double*, ed. and trans., with an introduction by Harry Tucker Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), p. 86.

> les vous lais, car je voi bien tout apertement que li graindres esfors, li graindres preus et li graindres los si est de ferir et d'abatre et d'ocire et de mehaignier li uns li autre, ki ne me samble pas santé! Je n'aimme pas celui païs u li cevalier acoustumeement, quant il s'entretruevent et il se devroient saluer et conjoir et acointier, s'entrabatent et ochient. Onques mais ne vi teus salus! Diex me gart de teus acointances! Vous qui l'avés acoustumé, remanés decha! Et je, ki ai apris autres salus de cevaliers et autres acointemens, m'en retournerai u roiaume de la Petite Bretaingne, car j'aim miex la demourer sains et haitiés que mourir en la Grant Bretaingne pour regarder et pour cerquier vos aventures et vos merveilles.[76]

The implication of Kaherdin's words here would seem to be that what happens in Logres is an aberration of chivalry. It is not chivalry itself which he is questioning but rather the peculiar perversion of it practised in Arthur's kingdom. This undercuts the fact that Arthur's kingdom is constantly held up as the ideal of chivalry.

Kaherdin's cynicism is borne out by his anonymous encounter with a knight soon afterwards. Engaged in a harsh combat it is only stopped once he realises that his opponent is none other than his father, who had come to Logres to find his son. Had their chivalric duty been carried out to the bitter end one of them could well have died. This episode will be studied in more detail in Chapter Five, when we consider the narrator's role in presenting it.

The excesses of chivalric customs in Logres will continue to be questioned, even after Kaherdin has died and is out of the narrative. Kaherdin's death occurs at the same time as Tristan is languishing in his *folie*. It is at the time of Tristan's healing, and subsequent banishment from Cornwall, that Tristan will team up with Dinadan. Dinadan will take up where Kaherdin left off in expressing reservations concerning the absolutism of chivalry, acting as his double in this sense. Much has been written about the nature of Dinadan's character and how this contributes to the ideology of the text. The critique of chivalry expressed in Dinadan's speech and behaviour is explicit in its criticisms of chivalry and this subversion of the ideal associated with

[76] TLF I, p. 190.

chivalry is well documented.[77]

As has already been mentioned, Dinadan teams up with Tristan, and later with Marc, during their respective first journeys through Logres. Dinadan is not a typical knight of Arthur's kingdom, and a lot of the humour in the *Prose Tristan* is conveyed through this character and the situations he finds himself in. He has been described as a clown, a coward and a subversive, who undermines the ideal of chivalry, be this through humour or dissent expressed towards the code by which he and fellow knights are sanctioned to live. This questioning is not apparent at the outset.

Dinadan seeks Tristan out in Cornwall, having heard of his reputation, only to learn that he is about to be banished from there. He challenges Tristan to a joust, is defeated, and then begs to be allowed to accompany him on his journey to Logres:

> Or va donc, fait il, a monsigneur Tristran et li di que je sui uns cevaliers errans, ki sui venus d'estranges teres en Cornuaille pour seulement veoir sa cevalerie et pour ce que je puisse jouster a lui et combatre. Or face tant de courtoisie pour un cevalier estrange k'il viengne jouster a moi avant k'il se mete en la mer.
>
> ...
>
> Ha! sire, merchi! fait li cevaliers. Puis que vous volés aler u royaume de Logres, je vous pri, par la foi que vous devés a la riens du monde que vous plus amés, que vous souffrés que je m'en aille avoec vous et que je vous face compaingnie.[78]

Dinadan, therefore, is paired with Tristan at the precise moment when the hero is being distanced physically from Iseut, and after the loss of Kaherdin. A long period of homosocial bonding is about to commence, following a period of heterosexual love

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[77] For further discussion of Dinadan see: A. Adler, 'Dinadan, inquiétant ou rassurant?' in *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune, professeur à l'Université de Liège,* 2 vols (Gembloux: Duculot, 1969), II, 935–943; K. Busby, 'The Likes of Dinadan: The Role of the Misfit in Arthurian Literature', *Neophilologus*, 67 (1993), 161-174; E. Vinaver, *A la recherche*; idem, 'Un chevalier errant à la recherche du sens du monde: Quelques remarques sur le caractère de Dinadan dans le *Tristan en Prose*', in *Mélanges de linguistique romane et de philologie médiévale offerts à M. Maurice Delbouille*, 2 vols, ed. by Jean Renson (Gembloux: Duculot, 1964), II, 677–686; Baumgartner, *Essai*, pp. 182-187; Philippe Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au moyen âge, 1150-1250*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 105 (Genève: Droz, 1969), pp. 459-461.

[78] TLF II, pp. 69-70.

between Tristan and Iseut. Iseut's confinement in Cornwall is symbolised by her watching passively and hopelessly from a tower, as the boat with Tristan disappears from view. Yet, the narrator's interest soon switches from her plight to that of her lover, and the demands of the new life and new relationships about to begin:

> ...la roïne Yseut, ki estoit montee en haut en la tour, et Brangien avoec li, qu'ele n'i voloit autre compaingnie, et regardoit la nef de loing, ki ja estoit dedens la mer. Et quant ele voit que la nef s'eslonge de tere et qu'ele s'en vait si durement, ele conmence a detordre ses mains et ses dois et se claimme caitive, maleüree et se conmenche mout mervelleusement a dementer et faire dueil... Mais se ele demainne son doeil grant et merveilleus pour le departement de son ami, chil pour qui ele se tourmente n'est mie mains tourmentés endroit soi, mais plus encore, selonc mon escient. Mais tant i avoit voirement k'il aloit celant son doeil, tant com il pooit, pour le cevalier estrange ki avoec lui estoit, dont il n'estoit encore acointes de riens.[79]

All would seem to be as expected at this stage between Dinadan and Tristan. However, it is not long before Dinadan is struggling to cope with the extent of Tristan's intent to pursue as many adventures and battles as possible in Logres in the name of chivalry. Having already fought off an ambush of thirty of Morgain's knights, they are faced with yet another joust in order to qualify for hospitality in a nearby castle. Dinadan cannot take any more:

> Je ne sai que vous en diriés, mais, par la foi que je doi vous, je voeil miex demeurer en ceste forest a seür que combatre moi tout maintenant et donc estre encore en doutanche k'il ne me couvenist hui mais combatre a autres cevaliers ki sourvenissent. Vous ki n'alés orendroit querant fors que batailles et mellees, vous poés asaier ichi! Je, ki de bataille n'ai cure, remanrai en ceste forest pour pais avoir.[80]

This is the first of many tirades from Dinadan directed at Tristan and his zealous chivalry, and they recall the words of Kaherdin during his final wanderings in the chivalric world before dying of a broken heart because of Iseut. However, unlike Kaherdin , who is a tragic and sad figure, Dinadan's words are often accompanied or

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[79] TLF II, p. 76.
[80] TLF II, pp. 128-9.

responded to by a smile. Also, at this point, Dinadan seems to be focused on criticising Tristan's personal zeal rather than on any more abstract notion of chivalry. It is not uncommon for Tristan to call his bluff:

> Mesire Tristans se rit mout durement des paroles de Dynadant. Il fait tout maintenant aporter ses armes et, quant il est armés, il fait samblant k'il soit mout courechiés, si dist adonc a Dynadant...-Dynadant, fait mesire Tristrans, je ne regarderai mie a vos paroles ne a vostre fole responsse, car, se g'i regardoie, je vous feroie anui et laidure, ce voi je bien. Je vous conmant a Nostre Signeur. – Alés a Dieu! fait Dynadans. Diex m'envoiera, s'il li plaist, tel compaingnie ki miex me fera que vous ne m'avés encore fait.[81]

Dinadan acts as a foil to Tristan. A voice of moderation, he can be seen to stand for discernment and common sense in a universe of absolutes. As Ménard says:

> Dans un monde empli d'aveugles ou de rêveurs, Dinadan est le seul à n'être pas dupe des apparences, à se montrer un homme lucide, un *voir disant*.[82]

On a more serious level perhaps, his complaints about the physical hardships endured also help to highlight the discomfort that was inherent in the life of a knight errant, an area often overlooked in romance. Tristan and other knights are represented as enduring hardship without complaint. The comic repartee also serves to bring out the lighter side of Tristan's character, a character engulfed in suffering separation from his lover, or in the seriousness of trying to establish his reputation in the Kingdom of Logres.

Needless to say, despite early disagreements, Dinadan is a faithful companion to Tristan during many episodes of the romance. Following imprisonment by Daras, after the tournament of the *Château des Pucelles,* he finds himself in an enclosed space with Tristan and Palamedés, whose rivalry is as intense as ever following the recent events at the tournament. Dinadan emerges as a reflective and useful

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[81] TLF II, p. 165.
[82] Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire*, p. 461.

character. The narrator skilfully engineers this situation in an enclosed space, with a hiatus in the wanderings of both Tristan and Palamedés, to explore further, through dialogue, the nature of their rivalry, with Dinadan acting as mediator. He realises who his two companions are and sets about defusing a potentially mortal combat. Drawing the analogy of two wild beasts caught in a pit together, he gradually brings to their attention the identity of their fellow inmate. He finishes by comparing them to Lancelot and Galehot:

> Palamidés, ce dist Dynadans, or oi je bien tout clerement par vos paroles k'il avra des ore mais boine pais entre vous et monsigneur Tristran. Bien serés ore loial ami. Ja Dieu ne plache que la vostre amour puisse mais tant durer com fist l'amour de Galehaut et de Lanselot du Lac, et non fera ele sans doute, che sai je tout vraiement!" Mesire Tristrans se rist des paroles de Dynadant...[83]

Laugh as Tristan might, Dinadan has rightly pointed out a male friendship of corresponding intensity. Of course, there is a difference in the bond between Galehot and Lancelot, which is intense in its own right, and only on Galehot's side is more important than that with his lady; it also threatens Lancelot's relationship with Guinevere. In the case of Tristan and Palamedés, the object and cause of the rivalry itself, and a sort of perverse companionship, is love for Iseut. Nevertheless, the bond is deep. Later, in the same prison, when Tristan falls ill, Palamedés is inconsolable, indeed as is Dinadan:

> Chelui jour avint que mesire Tristrans fu si malades destroitement, je ne sai de quel maladie, que Dyndans, ki le regarde et ki le voit si durement angoussous, quide bien tout chertainnement k'il doivent tout maintenant morir... Palamidés meïsmement em pleure fort, tout autresi com s'il fust ses freres carneus. Il doi en font si grant doeil com s'il fust proprement freres de cascun.[84]

Dinadan's bond with Tristan is an important aspect of the *Prose Tristan*, and he also facilitates bonding with and between other knights, including Palamedés and Marc.

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[83] TLF III, p. 191
[84] TLF III, p. 194.

In another literary reference he later likens Tristan and Palamedés to Renart and Ysengrin:

> Car vous estes, ce sai je bien, orendroit les .II. plus contraires coses que je sache veoir quil soient en tout le monde, tant comme il est grant. Pour coi je di que cis n'est mie Palamidés, ne chis autres n'est mie mesire Tristrans, a qui je parole orendroit car Palamidés et mesire Tristrans ne porroient estre ensamble ne demourer en un seul liu; et se concorde est entr'aus par aucun pecié, Renars et Ysengrins sont frere et bien voellans et cier ami! Di moi, pour Diu, Palamidés, de quans jours est ceste pais enconmencie et couvenencie? Non mie pais, mais seulement trives! Certes, se entre vous a pais, ele n'i vint pas d'amistié, ains i vint pour doute de paour que li uns de vous .II. avoit, u ambes .II. par aventure!
>
> Palamidés conmence a rire trop durement quant il entent ceste parole: "Ha! fait Palamidés, merci. Ne nous alés ensi gabant!..."[85]

Ysengrin and Renard were perpetual enemies, expecially after Renard's rape of Ysengrin's wife. Comparing Tristan to Renard implies considerable criticism, and comparing Palamedés to Ysengrin is barely more flattering. He also suggests that peace or a truce between Tristan and Palamedés has arisen from misfortune and that they are irreconcilable enemies.

Indeed, Dinadan's humour can also be quite cruel and hard-hitting. In his escapades in the company of King Marc he serves to undermine Marc's royal status and contributes to a series of what could be called carnivalistic examples of discrowning and ridicule. The series of adventures is most unlikely in the middle of a chivalric romance and could be seen to parody the representation of noble knights and worthy kings. It is an occasion where the romance could be seen to incorporate some elements of carnival.

In his book on Dostoevsky Bakhtin gives the four main effects of carnival as being liberation, eccentricity, familiarisation and profanation incorporated into literature through parody:

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[85] TLF VI, pp. 353-354.

> Parody is organically alien to pure genres (*épopée*, tragedy), but to the carnivalised genres it is... organically compatible. ... Parody is the creation of a double which discrowns its counterpart... it is that same inside-out world.[86]

Marc's foray into Logres is essentially one of a king without a crown, as he conceals his true identity and tries to pass himself off as a normal knight errant. He is therefore stripped of his status and privilege. His humiliation at the hands of Daguenet is very slap-stick and disrespectful. Dinadan is the architect of his downfall, having deceived him into believing that Daguenet is, in fact, Lancelot. He also ensures that Marc's embarrassment has an audience:

> Li rois s'enfuit tant conme il puet, trop durement espoentés et esmaiiés. Il ne se vait pas regardant com chil ki n'entent a autre cose fors que au fuir et a sauver son cors... Li compaingnon s'en vont aprés, riant et gabant durement et font une si grant criee que toute la forest en retentist.[87]

This treatment of King Marc is in contrast to the depiction of his earlier victories over Arthurian knights, such as Yvain or Kay, and in the judicial combat at Arthur's court. It would seem to reduce him to the role of being the butt of jokes, and the villain of the piece. This could be seen to suggest a lack of interest in a fixed viewpoint on the part of the author, or to re-inforce the idea that victory and defeat are merely a matter of accident, not of inherent prowess. Marc flees from the Logres knights, he encounters Palamedés, who, noticing his distress, proceeds to rescue him from his plight. Palamedés perceives the situation as being unfairly weighted against Marc, as he is vastly outnumbered. He defeats the knights one by one, thereby humiliating them in turn. Therefore, the balance is somewhat redressed by the end of the episode, with Palamedés demonstrating his superiority over the knights of the Round Table. What started out as an episode to undercut the Cornish king, concludes by undermining the Logres knights. It also undermines Marc even further, since Palamedés can do what he cannot. A hierarchy is established of Palamedés over the

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[86] Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 105.
[87] TLF IV, p. 130,

knights of Logre, with Marc at the bottom of the pile.

Dinadan has the last word, by orchestrating the performance of the *Lai Voir Disant,* where, this time, Marc is humiliated in front of his own Cornish subjects.[88] Again, as with Dinadan's earlier comments on chivalry, the criticism is not veiled at all. Marc is named and therefore explicitly denounced. In acting in this way, Dinadan could be seen, in fact, to be breaking one of the basic taboos of chivalric *fin 'amor*, by acting as a *lozengier* in the name of honour. The outcome of his action is for Marc to imprison Tristan, as he suspects his nephew of having been behind this. Therefore, two tricks played by Dinadan on Marc, firstly in the forest, and secondly in Cornwall, do not have the desired effect. His colleagues of the Round Table are humiliated by Palamedés in the first instance, and Tristan is imprisoned as a result of his second ruse against Marc. The nature of Dinadan's behaviour is more under scrutiny than that of his intended victim, Marc.

It is Dinadan who comes out with the most famous and oft-quoted line in the whole of the *Prose Tristan* . This remark has been seen by many to sum up the ideology, or perhaps lack of ideological certainty, in the *Prose Tristan* as a whole. These words are spoken to Agravain, following an incident where Dinadan refuses to avenge his defeated companion. Fearing certain defeat, Dinadan's line of reasoning is that it won't help matters for him to suffer the same fate as his companion. When accused of cowardice he points out that he is in better shape physically because of his measured attitude towards combat:

> Agrevain, che dist Dynadans, ma couardise me fait vivre, et vostre hardement vous fait orendroit estre a pié. Ce m'est avis, ceste n'est pas la premiere vilonnie que vous avés dite as chevaliers errans. Encore en avrés vous aucun guerredon en aucun tans, mais je ne sui pas chieus ki le vous rendra.[89]

Puzzled by this attitude Agravain asks him to reveal his identity. Dinadan's famous

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[88] TLF IV, pp. 344-345.
[89] TLF IV, p. 241.

reply is:

> Je sui uns cevaliers errans, fait Dynadans, ki cascun jour vois querant sens, ne point n'em puis a mon oes retenir.[90]

Dinadan's remarks calling for *mesure* are heard in the context of the audience just having learnt of Agravain's brother, Gaheriet, slaying their mother over her affair with Lamorat. The narrator is also at great pains to point out that Dinadan is not lacking in strength or prowess, and spares Agravain and Mordred on this occasion through his courtliness. However, he will eventually be slain treacherously by them:

> Agrevains, ki durement estoit orgueilleus, conmenche esranment la mellee sans regarder autre raison. Mais de cele mellee ne li caï il pas adonc si bien com il quidoit, car bien eüst Dynadans mort lui et l'autre chevalier s'il vausist. Mais pour ce k'il n'en voloit avoir blasme du roi Artus ne de chelui lingnage, le laissa il a metre a mort. Et il estoit sans faille si amesurés chevaliers qu'il ne meïst mie volentiers houme a mort tant com il s'em peüst garder. Si li tourna puis a damage, car aprés la quest du Saint Graal, grant pieche aprés la mort de monsigneur Tristran, l'ochist Agravains entre lui et Mordret assés pres de Camaaloth mout vilainnement ensi com nous deviserom tout apertement en chestui livre, car ce apartient a nostre matere.[91]

Dinadan emerges in a very postitive light from this encounter. His behaviour is in stark contrast to the Mordret's aggression, 'sans...raison', and Gaheriet's recent matricide. His earlier statement is all the more poignant and effective, as he is unable to find 'sens' in the midst of these events, and given the context, this is surely something the audience could identify with.

In an earlier exchange with Marc, following the latter's arrival in Logres his behaviour at the outset would appear more orthodox:

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[90] TLF IV, p. 242. Variant reading: 'je suis un chevalier errant qui chascun jor voiz aventures querant et le sens du monde; més point n'en puis trouver, ne point n'en puis a mon oés retenir.' Ms Paris BN f. fr. 334, folio 334b. The episode, according to this variant, is analysed in Vinaver, 'Un chevalier errant à la recherche du sens du monde', in *A la recherche*, p. 163-177, (p. 166).

[91] TLF IV, p. 243. Dinadan's death is not in fact related by Vienna 2542. It is found in BN f. fr. 24400.

> Or saciés que je sui uns chevaliers errans du roiaume de Logres, qui vois querrant aventures par mi le roiaume de Logres, ensi com chevalier errant doivent faire.[92]

However, as their meeting continues, his behaviour becomes less and less courtly, to the extent that Marc points this out to him:

> Li rois est durement iriés quant il entent cheste parole. Si dist a Dynadant: "Dans chevaliers, se Diex me saut, vous n'estes mie trop courtois – Ne je trop courtois ne voeil estre, fait Dynadans.[93]

Dinadan is rude and abusive towards Marc throughout this encounter. He accuses the Cornish king of cowardice and treachery. Marc declares that he is every bit as valiant as Dinadan. Given Dinadan's proven reluctance to enter into armed combat, and the earlier evidence of Marc's victories in the text, the king's stance is understandable. Dinadan's behaviour is difficult for other knights to fathom as he is seen to interpret the chivalric code differently, and at times, to be accused of cowardice. Dinadan's attitude towards Marc here is not courtly, and he admits to it. At this stage in the encounter he has identified Marc as being Cornish due to his accent, but does not realise to whom he is speaking. He proceeds to accuse the Cornish king of being courtly but without honour:

> Mais vostre rois, si est courtois et esflourés de toute hounour.[94]

This statement contributes to the theme of Marc as shadow, and it can also be seen to break the traditional link between *courtoisie* and *hounour*. This is all quite different from the fresh and enthusiastic tendencies Dinadan displayed when arriving in Cornwall to greet Tristan for the first time. Therefore, the relationship with Marc starts off on quite a different footing from the relationship with Tristan. By the time Dinadan is accompanying Marc on his travels he has perhaps grown in cynicism from his days as a novice knight accompanying Tristan. He has accompanied Tristan on

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[92] TLF IV, p. 86.
[93] TLF IV, p. 89.
[94] TLF IV, p. 89.

dangerous adventures, such as the ambush by Morgain's knights, fought in the tournament at the *Château des Pucelles*, and was subsequently imprisoned by Daras. He would also not seem impressed by his companions' love service. In Volume IV, during the debate by the fountain with Palamedés and Marc, he leaves no doubt as to his views about love:

> D'Amours ki si vait tourmentant et metant son sergant a mort me gart ore Dieus, et de tele amour me desfende!...De l'amour ki au cuer me tient sui je rians, gais, envoisiés.[95]

This attitude towards love resembles that of either the shepherd, or even the peasant in the pastoral May song, it is distinctly un-aristocratic.[96] These un-chivalric tendencies of Dinadan are reinforced by his more dubious contributions to the rich tapestry of the text's adventures. For example, the episode with Gaheriet and a demoiselle, where they fight over who has the right to take her by force following an injury to her escort.[97] Tristan has to intervene to ensure that justice is done to the young lady and she is restored to her proper companion. This plays as a parody of the Logres custom as defined by Chrétien de Troyes in his Lancelot.[98] On one level Dinadan can be seen as a double of Kaherdin but he also helps to reinforce the doubling of Tristan and Marc, functioning as a comic foil for them both. Dinadan embodies the closest to what can be called carnival, as the term is used by Bakhtin in the Dostoevsky book. The words *rire* and *sourire* often accompany his appearance in an episode and he lightens the tone of the text.[99]

Dinadan is therefore a key character when reading the *Prose Tristan* and considering the concept of carnival, which is linked to novelness, as discussed in Chapter Two.

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[95] TLF IV, p. 154.

[96] There would not appear to be any studies of the etymology of Dinadan's name. It could be pseudo Arabic, or perhaps be broken down to Din – Adam. Therefore, a link with the primal state and rustic innocence could be assured, and his general critique of chivalric society as well as of its code of love becomes more explicable.

[97] TLF V, p. 216.

[98] See Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), for discussion of this particular Logres custom, which she views as an aestheticisation of rape.

[99] See Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire*, pp. 459-461.

He can be seen to be quite close to the role of the fool, or the clown. He has a tendency to subvert the established order, albeit with a smile on his lips. His desire for physical comfort would also seem to take precedence over achieving countless adventures and proving his prowess to knights encountered on his wanderings. Having said that, the *Prose Tristan* is not a carnival text to the extent that Bakhtin considers Rabelais' works to be. However, it can be argued that characters such as Dinadan are paving the way for what is to come:

> As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of the time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalised and completed.
>
> ...
>
> this temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life.[100]

Dinadan, when he questions chivalry in the company of Tristan and other knights, represents the right to be other. He represents the right to behave differently and interpret actions differently from those around him who adhere more strictly to the widely accepted code of conduct. He takes over this role from the recently departed Kaherdin, who in the latter stages of his chivalric career, in the light of his rejection by Iseut, constantly questioned the customs of Logres.

Bakhtin insists on the 'temporary suspension' of hierarchy by carnival. In the vulgate of the *Prose Tristan*, Dinadan is not present at the beginning, nor at the conclusion of the romance. In fact, he disappears from the narrative during the Grail Quest episodes although he is mentioned by Tristan in his dying farewell to chivalry.[101] Yet, his interventions, in combination with other factors in the romance, would seem to

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[100] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10.

[101] An exception to this is the manuscript Paris BN f. fr. 24400, a fragmented and late version of the *Prose Tristan*, which includes adventures of Dinadan in Cornwall following the death of the lovers, where he wages war on Marc with Dinas. This attempt fails and he returns to Logres where he is treacherously assassinated by Mordret and Agravain. See Baumgartner, *Essai*, pp. 84-85.

have irrevocably undermined chivalric ethics. As a character, he is not without effect; he is more than a buffoon and a clown providing comic relief: his words pervade the romance interacting with, and challenging, more conventional portrayals of chivalry and he can be seen, perhaps, to be drawing the audience into his way of thinking.

Marc and Arthur / Cornwall and Logres

In the *Prose Tristan,* then, the relationships between characters may appear to act on one level as antitheses and therefore a form of dialectic, but, if we look deeper, there is an osmosis and merging between the different characters' characteristics, and the ideologies that they embody. Tristan and Marc are both oppressors and oppressed. Tristan and Palamedés are both lovers. Tristan and Lancelot are at different times described as the best knights in the world. Tristan embodies both positive and negative features. This displacement of roles does not occur in the *Prose Lancelot* to nearly the same extent.[102] There is doubling of roles in the *Prose Lancelot*. Hector and Lyonel are closely linked to Lancelot, and at times continue the theme of the 'young warrior in love advancing towards fame as a knight'. In love, the main character unable to resolve the conflict with duty is Galehot; Lancelot's situation is more complex.[103]

Just as the underlying oppositions between Tristan and other characters can be described as more dialogical than a form of dialectic, so can the underlying opposition in the text between Cornwall and Logres, personified by Marc and Arthur. This relationship is fundamental to the romance and quite an innovation compared to both the verse redactions of the *Tristan* legend and the prose romances which preceded the *Prose Tristan*. Despite a degree of contrast and mirroring, the relationship between Cornwall and Logres is not one of pure opposition. Good and evil exist side by side

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[102] The closest we come to this in the *Prose Lancelot* is with the character of Arthur, who is sometimes presented as a good model for kingship and at others not. He does not compare favourably with Galehot but does with Claudas in the early adventures of the *Prose Lancelot*, Micha VII.

[103] See Kennedy, *Lancelot and the Grail*, p. 48, for discussion of Galehot. Lancelot has problems in resolving the conflict between love and duty in that he fails in the Grail Quest and his love brings about the end of Arthur's kingdom. However, this same love has also earlier saved Arthur's kingdom.

in both places. The harmony of Logres is threatened from within by characters such as Brehus Sans Pitié. Brehus deliberately flouts the customs of Logres, setting out to abduct young damsels and subvert the good will of chivalry. Morgain, Arthur's sister, also has dubious status in the romance. Driven by jealousy and bitterness she contributes directly to the death of the hero. Dinas, the good seneschal, directly taken from the verse redactions of the legend, is an example of Cornish virtue, and Tristan himself has a Cornish mother.

Marc and Arthur themselves, the Kings of Cornwall and Logres, embody the ambivalent nature of their two kingdoms. The figure of Arthur is problematic in the *Prose Tristan*, as in the rest of the Arthurian romance tradition. He is cuckold, and his authority is often undermined. When Marc arrives at Arthur's court after his first foray into the kingdom of Logres he immediately subverts the custom of the judicial combat by defeating Armant to demonstrate wrongly his innocence in the matter of Bertholai's death earlier in his journey. It is left to Lancelot to settle the affair by bringing Marc to justice himself.[104] Arthur stands by and watches helplessly as his laws are first flouted and then rectified. At no point does he intervene. He later displays his naïvety when he insists that Marc and Tristan be reconciled and return to Cornwall to live together in peace. Lancelot displays a greater insight than Arthur into the danger that Tristan will be in by returning to Cornwall with his uncle:

> Quant li rois Artus, che dist li contes, ot en tel maniere fait l'acorde du roi March et de monsigneur Tristran, grans est la joie que plusieur chevalier font. Li plusieur en sont lié et li autre dolant. Lanselos en est trop courechiés. ... Et une autre cose i avoit encore ki li faisoit greigneur paour: che est ce k'il pensoit que ja si tost li rois March ne le tenroit en Cornuaille k'il le feroit ochirre en aucune maniere...[105]

This can be seen to echo Arthur's naïvety vis-à-vis Lancelot and Guinevere in both the *Prose Lancelot* and the *Prose Tristan*. Arthur is not portrayed as evil, but rather as weak and foolish, lacking authority, at least in certain episodes. Marc is autocratic

[104] TLF IV, p. 163.
[105] TLF IV, p. 221.

and morally weak. Neither is a good model for kingship in this instance. There are times though when Arthur is presented as a more positive model for kingship.[106]

As has already been shown, despite being labelled as a coward, and typically Cornish, Marc is victorious in combat with some well-established Logres knights, such as Yvain and Kay. These victories, along with Tristan's prowess, go some way to dismantling this bad reputation of Cornish knights, and the dichotomy of good and evil, brave and cowardly, so readily cited by critics. Indeed, Lancelot and his kinsmen take up the Cornish shield as a tribute to Tristan, when he first arrives in Logres.[107] Logres is still widely considered within the text as the centre of excellence for chivalry. All worthy knights wish to be received at Arthur's court. Yet, this is challenged by the behaviour of certain Logres knights, such as the above-mentioned Brehus, and to a certain extent, the uncourtly tendencies of Dinadan too. Knights from outwith Logres, Tristan and Palamedés, frequently defeat their illustrious counterparts in combat. Even Marc triumphs on occasion. The intriguing relationship between Logres and Cornwall can be seen as yet another subtle attack on the chivalric tradition, part of the ongoing erosion of Logres' longstanding reputation as the flagship of Christendom. The text is not a complete dismantling of Logres' reputation, that would be going too far, but it is a serious challenge to its status as epitomising the peak of chivalric achievement.[108]

Doubling and pairing of characters, as it is handled in the *Prose Tristan*, does not unify the text. It leads to further fragmentation and decentralisation of the romance. Tristan is a multi-centred figure, who relates to different characters in different ways. The reverse of this argument would claim that he binds the other characters together, but surely his character is so unstable that this cannot be the case. He does not provide a stable point of reference, rather a shifting one. There is also doubling between other characters, with further displacement of qualities and ideals. This

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[106] See above, note 102, p. 167.

[107] See TLF II, p. 157, which details this gesture of Lancelot's gratitude towards Tristan for fighting off Morgain's knights who had intended to ambush Lancelot himself.

[108] There is already perhaps an example of this in the *Prose Lancelot* with the serious challenge of Galehot and his men to Logres' status and reputation.

instability and fragmentation of the central character will inevitably have an effect on the ideology and themes explored in the text. The organisation of the narrative, as discussed in the previous chapter, was seen to resemble, undermine and challenge the tradition from which the *Prose Tristan* is drawn. The doubling of characters within the romance, and with characters from other romances, as we have seen, reinforces this interpretation of the narrative technique. The doubling and shadowing of Tristan inherent in his relationships with his male counterparts destabilises the hero, and hence the ideologies he is being used to explore. Repetition as a diegetic equivalent to doubling and shadowing of characters functions both intra-textually and inter-textually to generate a de-centralising effect which contributes to the novelistic status of the *Prose Tristan*.

Echoing and Recurring Motifs

The doubling of characters itself has a decentralising effect and, as we have seen above, helps bring to light certain themes and motifs which emerge as key aspects of the romance. These also recur, and, as with the characters who play them out, the arising themes overlap and merge dialogically. The three main motifs that we shall concentrate on are love (mainly misery in love), healing from madness (*folie*) or mortal wounds, and tournaments. The aim is to see if this particular form of repetition is a unifying force, in a way that relates to *temps qualitatif,* or another decentralising one in the romance.

As with the doubling of characters, many themes and motifs which recur throughout the *Prose Tristan* relate to the *Lancelot-Graal* and to the earlier verse redactions of the *Tristan* legend. For example, Tristan's *folie,* when he mistakenly believes that Iseut is in love with Kaherdin, is similar to Lancelot's *folie* when, having been deceived by a damsel, who leads him unknowingly to the wrong bed, Guinevere discovers him with Pelles' daughter. The theme of healing also figures in the Grail romances, as well as being an important motif in the original Tristan romances. The chivalric universe, as portrayed in the *Prose Tristan,* is that of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, governed by many of the same customs and practices. Among these is the

practice of holding tournaments.

Tournaments: Chivalric Rivalry

An important part of the rivalry of knights, as described earlier, is played out and structured by the motif of tournaments, which intersperse the *Prose Tristan*. Tournaments are part of the back-drop of courtly life. Important social gatherings, they allow knights to display their prowess and ladies their beauty. They are a familiar part of chivalric romance. In the *Prose Tristan* the narrator exploits the motif of tournaments to develop a major theme of the romance, that is, the rivalry between Tristan and Palamedés.[109]

As Philip Bennett points out in his article, the rivalry between Tristan and Palamedés over the love of Iseut has its beginnings at the tournament in front of the *Château des Landes*, in Ireland, where Palamedés triumphs and earns the admiration of all at the Irish court. Tristan manages to steal the Saracen's thunder at another tournament ten days later. As described earlier, he had noticed Palamedés' affection for the young Princess Iseut, and this rivalry is his first inspiration in love. In the second combat in Ireland Tristan lays down the challenge to Palamedés:

> "Retornez, sire chevaliers, si verrons li quiex de nos deus doit avoir par sa chevalerie l'amor de demoisele Yselt"... Tristanz, qui venoit iriez et correciez, l'espee dreciee contremont, si grant erre com il pooit del cheval traire, fiert Palamedes si durement de tote sa force desus le heaume que cil vole a terre estordiz et estonez si durement qu'il ne set s'il est nuiz ou jorz.[110]

Therefore, the tournament scene is ideal to show how he frustrates Palamedés' designs on Iseut from the outset. Furthermore it establishes Iseut's status as a chivalric prize, frustrating Palamedés' claim on her as a devoted *fin amant*. The tournaments function to justify, as a series of self-fulfilling prophecies, both Tristan's view of the world and Iseut's status as an object of chivalric competition.

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[109] See Philip Bennett, 'Tournaments in the *Prose Tristan*', for more detailed discussion of this point.

[110] Curtis I, p. 168.

This particular episode is also the first of many scenes of Palamedés' grief when defeated by his rival:

> Et quant il a grant piece son duel demené en tel maniere, il deslace son heaume et le giete a terre tant com il puet, et ses deus espees et son escu et son haubert, et totes ses autres armes qu'il portoit. Et quant il est toz desarmez, il vient a son cheval et monte, si lermoiant des iex, si plorant que nus le veïst qu'il ne s'en merveillast.[111]

Palamedés here is lamenting his defeat because having accepted Tristan's terms he has lost the chivalric prize, Iseut. This occurs before the love potion has been drunk by Tristan and Iseut; therefore, technically Palamedés has no worse chance at this stage than Tristan. However, the fictive universe is sealed, up to a point, by the inherited tradition and Palamedés is at a disadvantage as the narrator inscribes Tristan as best knight. The implicit dialogue between values established by the *Prose Tristan* characters and the verse romances is frustrated by audience knowledge of the tradition. After the episode of the love potion, Palamedés is in a double bind as neither his love service as *fin amant*, nor his defeat of Tristan would secure him Iseut.

The tournaments also serve to develop other themes too. For example, the tournament of *Château des Pucelles* is Tristan's debut in Logres society, albeit incognito. It serves as a prelude to his rivalry with Lancelot for the mantle as finest knight in Logres. The tournament is a useful organisational device which brings them together. They clash briefly on the second day of the tournament, just as Tristan was about to retire from combat. Caught unawares and now wounded, he decides to leave, still incognito.[112] This echoes in the *Prose Lancelot* and the *Mort Artu* the motif of Lancelot, incognito, being wounded, which can lead to dire consequences for his love for Guinevere.[113]

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[111] Curtis I, p. 170.
[112] TLF II, p. 332.
[113] See for example, *La Mort Artu*, ed. by Jean Frappier, p. 15 ff. Lancelot's injury at the Winchester tournament leads to an enforced absence from court. During this time Agravain raises doubts about Lancelot's fidelity to Arthur and his affair with the queen, while, following reports from Gauvain, Guinevere believes Lancelot to have been unfaithful by being in love with the demoiselle d'Escalot.

As a result of Tristan's premature departure from *Château des Pucelles*, Lancelot declares the quest for Tristan and, following many intervening adventures, their single combat will take place at the *Perron Merlin* at the end of TLF III. This leads to Tristan's presentation to the Round Table and the start of his full integration into the Arthurian world.

Following Tristan's second foray into Logres, this time with Iseut, the tournament of Louveserp is called by Arthur in order to bring Tristan and Iseut into the public eye, from their retreat at the *Joyeuse Garde*. It is probably the chivalric high point of the romance for the lovers, with Iseut's beauty and Tristan's prowess on display for the first time. They gain official confirmation from Arthur himself as to their standing as the leading knight and lady in the courtly world:

> Ma dame, fait li rois a la roïne Yseut, or saciés tout certainnement que je me tenisse pour mort toute ma vie, se je ne vous eüsse veüe avant que vous de ci vous partissiés. Car saciés tout vraiement que tout cil ki vous ont veüe dient merveilles de vostre biauté: cascuns vous loe et prise et cascune vous tient a la plus bele dame de tout cest monde... Veüe vous ai, la Dieu merci! Si m'en tieng, se Diex me consaut, a boin eüré et di bien tout apertement que vous passés de biauté toutes les dames de cest monde. De ce se puet bien vanter Tristrans qu'il a en sa compaingnie la plus bele dame du monde! Et vous repoés dire d'autre part que vous avés en vostre conmandement le meilleur cevalier du monde et le plus bel![114]

It is one thing for Arthur to opine that Tristan is a better or more handsome knight than Lancelot. It is quite another to speculate on the comparative beauty of Guinevere and Iseut. At various stages in the romance, Lancelot and Tristan have appeared together, notably in single combat at the *Perron Merlin*. This combat is inconclusive in so far as the knights recognise each other while fighting, and promptly lay down their arms. The narrator intervenes, invoking the authoritative *estoire* to state that Tristan is not as badly injured as Lancelot, and to imply that he is the victor:

> Et nonpourquant, che devise bien l'estoire tout apertement que mesire Tristrans en avoit auques le plus bel, com chil ki mains avoit perdu du

[114] TLF V, pp. 347–348.

sanc et ki mains avoit de plaïïes.[115]

However, given that there is no official victory for Tristan over Lancelot in this episode, the final verdict on who is in fact the greater knight remains open.

Similarly, at the tournament of Louveserp Tristan outshines all other knights, including Lancelot. Therefore the audience is given the opportunity to compare Tristan and Lancelot, and to draw their own conclusions from the representation of certain events by the narrator. There is perhaps an implied preference for Tristan, who is after all the eponymous hero and the focus of the romance.

The implication of Arthur's statement that Iseut is more beautiful than Guinevere is more significant than any statements comparing Tristan and Lancelot, given that the narrator scrupulously avoids having the two queens on stage together. Guinevere is side-lined through illness and at Louveserp Iseut is centre-stage. It could be seen as a diplomatic ploy by the narrator, thereby avoiding having to declare who is the more beautiful. In contrast to the depiction of the knights, who are portrayed in action, the depiction of the ladies is that of a passive object. Rather than being involved in any action as such, they are judged by the effect their beauty has on those who see them. Therefore, for the narrator to have to compare the two queens in the one scene, and comment on their beauty, would be the equivalent of having to allow for either Tristan or Lancelot to emerge victorious from single combat. By keeping them separate, Iseut's superiority may be implied, from the mouth of Arthur or other characters, but no authoritative statement is made. This is in contrast to the scene at the *Perron Merlin*, where the narrator invokes the *estoire* to impose a judgement.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Louveserp tournament is incorporated into a very strict chronology in TLF V, and allows the narrator to display a talent for realism and attention to rather gritty physical detail. The physical danger and potential for death are ever present in the lengthy accounts of these two major tournaments at *Château*

[115] TLF III, p. 279.

des Pucelles and Louveserp. Indeed, following the former tournament, Daras, the grieving father of three of Tristan's victims, all brothers, endeavours to avenge their death by imprisoning their slayer. The description of his grief and anger is very vivid, when a messenger brings news of his loss:

> La u ele voit Daras, ele s'en vient devant lui et li dist: "Sire, nouveles vous aport mout anïeuses et mout vilainnes pour vous. Or sachiés pour voir que vostre doi fil ainsné son ochis en cest tournoiement, et li tiers est si durement navrés que l'on aporte em biere cevaleresse ci aprés moi." Quant li preudom entent ceste nouvele, il ne fait onques autre cose, ains chiet a tere tous envers du grant doeil ki au cuer li prent et gist illuec une grant pieche en pasmison. Li deus conmenche par laiens tout maintenant si grans et si merveilleus que nus ne veïst chelui doeil ki bien ne desist tout plainnement que ce n'estoit mie deus a gas k'il demenoient.... Quant li preudom vit ses deus fiex ochis en tel maniere que li uns avoit esté par mi le pis d'un glaive et li autres d'une espee par mi la teste si que li caus li estoit venus dusques vers les iex, s'il est iriés de grant maniere, ce ne fait pas a merveillier.[116]

This is a typical example of the narrator's ambivalent attitude towards chivalric customs. At the same time as the heroes are celebrated for their bravery and prowess, the grief and pain of the victims is not glossed over or glamorised. Similarly, there is also frequent reference to the bodily discomfort felt by the fighter, in this instance, Dinadan and others after combat at Louveserp:

> Palamidés est tant batus quil n'a menbre kil ne s'en doeille; boines enseignes en aporte en mi son vis. Si fait mesire Tristrans meïsmement; il ne l'en puet gaires gaber, car tant i a caus receüs que il s'en sent et sentira maint jour aprés. Dynadans est teus atournés que il ne set k'il doie dire; il n'a membre k'il ne s'en doeile; et sour tout ce il est navrés, mais non mie de plaie mortel. Gaheriés se sent mout mal.[117]

The above passage is quite a litany of battered heroes, and quite unconventional for chivalric romance. All the knights involved, be they Saracen, from Logres, or from Cornwall, of greater or lesser repute, are badly affected physically by what they have undergone. Yet these two tournaments do also have a certain decorative purpose in

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[116] TLF III, pp. 89-90.
[117] TLF V, p. 306.

the romance. They are a splendid vehicle for lavish descriptions, and indications of the wealth of resources available to the court. The use of descriptive language will be looked at more closely in Chapter Five, including description of events and descriptions of objects. The ambivalent critique of chivalry is also continued in tournaments, as courtly life is portrayed in its richness, and combat in all its brutality.

The distribution of these tournaments does provide a certain coherence to the narrative organisation. It is a useful way to develop and highlight themes treated elsewhere in the text, and of bringing characters together. As recurring chronotopic motifs, tournaments provide a familiar frame of reference for the audience. There is a certain circularity about it all, but unlike with other motifs, the emphasis at each of the tournaments does shift according to the narrative situation. There is a progression in Tristan's appearances. At the *Château des Landes* he is largely unknown, and wishes to make an impression on the young Iseut. At the *Château des Pucelles*, he is still unidentified in Logres, but it will spark off a quest which will lead to his eventual arrival at Arthur's court. His final glorious appearance will be at Louveserp. These three tournaments also mark out his increasing superiority over Palamedés in the competition to merit Iseut's affection. The worldly glory of his role at Louveserp is in stark contrast to the next great series of adventures in the romance, which are those associated with the Grail Quest. In this respect, they are an important structuring device in the romance.

Two tournaments which are referred to in the romance, but only reported on briefly, are the tournament of the *Roche Dure* and at the *Château du Plain.*[118] The *Roche Dure* tournament follows Tristan's imprisonment by Morgain, not long after he has escaped from Daras' prison. She has asked him, as a *don en blanc*, to sport a shield at this tournament, depicting a knight standing with one foot on the head of a king and the other on the head of the queen, a deliberate attempt to publicly humiliate Lancelot, Guinevere and Arthur. Here, Morgain is subverting the celebratory role of the tournaments. Along with prowess and beauty tournaments also celebrate chivalric

[118] TLF III, p. 223 and TLF IV, p. 229 respectively.

and courtly virtues. Morgain is also subverting these, her comment is social and echoes the episode of the magic shield in the *Prose Lancelot* which mimics the physical union of the lovers, revealing the reality of *fin 'amor*.[119] Tournaments also brought important dignitaries together: The *Roche Dure* tournament is attended by the Kings of Scotland and Ireland. Tristan wins the day, but the narrator glosses over the details:

> Mais pour ce que trop seroit grans anuis et grans alonges de conter mot a mot tous les fais que mesire Tristrans fist a chest tournoiement ne vous en voeil je pas ore granment deviser, anchois m'en passerai briement a cheste fois, pour ce que sour autre matere me couvient tourner.[120]

The shield that Tristan is sporting causes great consternation and Arthur himself wishes to find out its meaning. He pursues the incognito Tristan at the end of the tournament and challenges him, only to be defeated by him in single combat. Yvain is also defeated. Tristan manages to get away and dispose of the incriminating shield. Tristan has once more outshone the best of the Logres knights, and Morgain has endeavoured to embarrass Lancelot and Guinevere. It is a double undermining of Logres chivalry and of an established social order.

The other tournament, at the *Château du Plain*, is also linked in with an episode which also undermines the reputation of Logres chivalry. It does not involve any of the main protagonists of the romance, but features Lamorat. The events are reported, intradiegetically, by a messenger at Arthur's court:

> "Sire, nouveles vous aport orendroit. Or sachiés que ja a grant tans k'il n'ot u roiaume de Logres un si boin tournoiement ne si fort com il ot ier devant le castel du Plain... li uns des enfans le roi Pellynor de Lystenoys a tout vaincu....Et cil ki a l'asamblee furent, et ki virent la grant merveille d'armes k'il i fist, dient bien tout apertement que, se mesire Tristrans meïsmes i fust et il portast armes, k'il nel peüst mie miex avoir fait que chil le fist a cest fois. – che fu donc Lamorat, fait li rois, cil ki l'asamblee

[119] See *Lancelot do Lac*, ed. by Elspeth Kennedy, I , pp. 401-403. This episode is adapted and incorporated into the early stages of the *Prose Tristan*, where Tristan meets the young messenger on her way to Arthur's court with the shield. see Curtis I pp. 204-5.
[120] TLF III, p. 223.

vainqui![121]

This message and account of Lamorat's achievement is sandwiched between two significant events. The first is the knighting of Perceval, Lamorat's brother and one of the principal heroes of the Grail Quest, along with Boort and Galahad, thereby invoking an ideal of chastity and spirituality in contrast with the following narrative. The second is the account of how Gaheriet treacherously slays his mother, while she is sleeping with Lamorat. Lamorat can be seen as a double of Tristan, in the motif of misery in love. The scene where his lover is slain by her son, who takes on the role of *jaloux* and *lozengier*, and usurps the legal place of the jealous husband, has inter-textual echoes of Marc finding Tristan and Iseut in the Morois forest in Béroul's *Tristan*, with the sword lying between them. In Béroul's text Marc does not act on that occasion. Equally, it could be seen to prefigure Tristan's death, at the end of the romance, only that Marc slays Tristan, sparing his wife.

Therefore, the tournament of the *Roche Dure,* can be seen to further undermine Logres on two accounts, by Tristan's victory and Morgain's subversion of the positive tournament ideal. The tournament of *Château du Plain*, and its placing in the text, raise yet more questions. Lamorat is victorious at the tournament, and this further enrages Gaheriet, already angry at the liaison between his mother and the young knight. The treacherous matricide which follows brings great shame on Logres and the lineage of King Lot:

> Quant chis fait fu contés en la maison le roi Artu que Gaheriés avoit mise sa mere a mort pour Lamorat, chis fais li fu atournés a rage et a forsenerie. Li rois en fu mout courechiés...[122]

Therefore it can be argued that the recurring motif of tournaments acts as a centripetal, organising force in the romance, adding coherence to the narrative and serving to develop important themes. The main featured tournaments, *Château des*

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[121] TLF IV, p. 229.

[122] TLF IV, p. 235. It is worth noting in passing that Gauvain is angry with his brother for having spared Lamorat. He himself will kill the knight soon afterwards. See TLF IV, p. 349.

Pucelles and Louveserp, serve to develop the rivalry between Tristan and Palamedés. They also help the linear development of the text as the situation develops on each occasion. The other two are more peripheral to the narrative but add to a number of episodes which serve to question the chivalry, and knights, of Logres. This undermining of Logres is in itself a recurring motif, and creates its own circularity within a rhythmic cycle of the recurrent tournaments. Their role as festive celebrations of chivalry initiates a form of *temps qualitatif* emphasised by the slowing of narrative pace at *Château des Pucelles* and Louveserp. This is called in question by the presentation of these two tournaments and further undermined by the presentation of *Roche Dure* and *Château du Plain*.

Healing: *Folie* and Fatal Injuries

The first glimpse of Iseut in the *Prose Tristan* is as a young girl, renowned for her healing powers.

> Et avoec eus estoit Yselt la Bloie, la plus bele pucele qui a celi tens fust ou monde, et une des plus saiges. Cele savoit de cirurgie et de medecines a merveilles, et conoissoit la force et le pooir de totes les herbes. Ne il n'estoit ou monde plaie si estrange, ne si merveilleuse bleceüre dont ele ne cuidast bien a chief venir, et torner la a garison. Et si n'avoit ele pas encores quatorze ans d'aaige.[123]

Tristan's first encounter with Iseut comes about when she exercises her healing powers to help him recover from the poisonous wound inflicted by the Morholt. The wound is potentially fatal, and on this occasion she saves Tristan's life. This episode and the motif it introduces are inherited from the verse tradition.[124]

The next occurrence of healing is from his *folie* at the end of the TLF I. In this instance, Tristan is languishing in a state of madness, induced by the mistaken belief that Iseut has forsaken him for his brother-in-law, Kaherdin. Tristan's *folie* is in

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[123] Curtis I, p. 157.

[124] The episode of Tristan's first healing is not preserved in the manuscripts of Béroul and Thomas, but has been passed on indirectly by the later *Norse Saga*, which is a translation of Thomas, and the German adaptations by Eilhart and Gottfried. For further details see *Tristan et Iseut*, ed. by Lacroix and Walter.

essence a symbolic death, which marginalises him from society and the court, as he is no longer able to relate to people or be integrated into his usual milieu. During this time he dwells with some shepherds in the wilderness.[125] The theme of *folie* is present in the verse tradition in the *Folie Tristan*, Berne and Oxford manuscripts. However, in those episodes Tristan feigns madness in order to obtain an audience with Iseut. The episode, as it is treated in the *Prose Tristan*, owes more to the influence of Chrétien de Troye's *Yvain* and the madness of Lancelot in the *Prose Lancelot.*[126] Lancelot has various lapses into a sort of frenzy, as pointed out by Curtis in her article, but there is one period of *folie* in particular which would seem to have influenced the *Prose Tristan.*[127] In both Lancelot and Tristan's case, they believe that they are out of favour with their lady. The text describes their emotional anguish and then goes on to relate their actions prior to being cured, Lancelot by the Holy Grail, Tristan by the attentions of Iseut and others at Marc's court:

> Que vous diroie je? Tant tint li rois March son neveu en ses cambres et tant en fist prendre grant cure a la roïne meïsmes et as autres, que mesire Tristrans gari de cele forsenerie k'il avoit, ki auques longement l'avoit tenu.[128]

Once again Tristan needs Iseut's healing touch to recover from his wounds, this time psychological. While the motif of *folie* has been borrowed from earlier texts, it is interesting to see how the theme has been dealt with. It is certainly significant also that Lancelot's cure emanates from the Holy Grail and Tristan's from Iseut's healing hands, indicating how priorities may have shifted from one romance to the other.[129]

In keeping with the pattern of the verse romance of Tristan, Iseut is unable to prevent

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[125] See, Philippe Ménard, 'Tristan et les Bergers', in *Nouvelles recherches*, ed. by Dufournet, pp. 149–171.

[126] Renée L. Curtis, 'Tristan Forsené: The Episode of the Hero's Madness in the *Prose Tristan*', in *The Changing Face of Arthurian Romance: Essays on Arthurian Prose Romances in Memory of Cedric E. Pickford* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1986), pp. 10-22.

[127] See *Lancelot en Prose*, 9 vols, ed. by Micha, VI, pp. 174-7 and 207-25. See also ibid., II, p. 1 and ibid., VIII, p. 452 ff. for other examples which resemble less closely the *folie* Tristan.

[128] TLF I, p. 276.

[129] Lancelot's healing, interpolated from the *Lancelot-Graal,* is found in TLF VI, pp. 198-199. As mentioned above, see note 41, p. 139, Lancelot is also healed on an earlier occasion in the *Prose Lancelot* by the Lady of the Lake.

the death of her lover with her healing powers. In both instances she is prevented from reaching Tristan in time in order to be of any help. The gravity of Tristan's wounds would seem to be more severe, as mentioned earlier; his wounds are also symbolic, although this depends on the manuscript version:[130]

> Quant mesire Tristrans se senti feru, il connut bien qu'il estoit ferus a mort. ... Mesire Tristrans se plaint que mout grant mal sent. Il souspire et pleure. Mesire Tristrans se demente et amaigrist et empire trop malement si que, ançois qu li mois fust passés, nus qui devant l'eüst veü nel reconneüst. Il ne se puet mais remuer et crie et brait par grant dolour, ausi con s'il fust hors del sens. Si compaingnon, qui bien connoissent le grant dolour qu'il sent, pleurent devant lui jor et nuit, car bien sevent certainnement qu'il est a la mort. Il meïsmes le voit bien et cil d'entour lui autresi.[131]

It is towards the end of the *Prose Tristan* that Tristan abandons the Grail Quest to return to Cornwall and be near Iseut. In what is another recurring scenario, the love triangle of Marc, Iseut and Tristan, is back in full operational order. The ensuing intrigue, adultery and jealousy at court echo the scenes prior to the sojourn in the Morois Forest, Tristan's banishment from Cornwall and finally the time prior to Tristan and Iseut's departure for the *Joyeuse Garde*. These scenarios would suggest a circularity of time within the romance, based on the principle of return, in keeping with *temps qualitatif* rather than *temps quantitatif*, as discussed in the previous section. However, in this final scene, Marc, after years of hesitating, finally seizes the opportunity to kill Tristan. He uses the poisoned lance given to him by Morgain for the purpose. This was prophesied earlier on, and fulfilled accordingly:

> Et encore te di je bien une autre cose dont jou voeil que tu soies chertains: tu ne morras devant che que tu morra de chele meïsmes lanche dont tu l'ochesis, vraiement le saches tu.[132]

> Or dist li contes que un jour estoit entrés Mesire Tristrans es cambres la roïne et harpoit un lay qu'il avoit fait. Audret l'entendi et le vint conter au roi March, si fist puis tant qu'il feri monsigneur Tristran d'un glaive

[130] See below, p. 180, re the nature of Tristan's mortal wound.
[131] TLF IX, p. 188.
[132] TLF III, p. 218.

envenimé que Morgain li ot baillié. Mesire Tristrans estoit desarmés, si que li rois le feri mortelment par mi la quisse...[133]

This time, even Iseut's healing powers are not enough to restore her lover and he dies. Iseut dies in Tristan's arms, expiring in a last embrace with him. Responsibility for Tristan's death is shared between Morgain, Audret and Marc. Morgain perhaps can be seen to operate as the double for Iseut of Brittany, acting as the jealous female figure, given the unexplained absence of the second Iseut from the romance following Tristan's departure from Brittany with Kaherdin. Morgain could also be seen to act as an effective shadow.[134]

The motif of healing recurs in the prose romance in a similar pattern to the verse romance. Ultimately, Iseut's healing powers are not sufficient to save her lover from death. The recurring motif does create a feeling of circularity, but, as with the tournaments, each healing situation has a slightly different emphasis. Iseut heals Tristan firstly from physical and then psychological wounds, but she cannot redeem him from death at the end, death by the poisoned spear of Morgain, with echoes of supernatural evil. At no point is Tristan healed by the Holy Grail, unlike Lancelot, who is partially redeemed and does confess his adultery on occasion. The motif of healing helps to emphasise the purely worldly nature of Tristan's quest and underlines his frail mortality and the mortality of love.

The prophecy fulfilment scheme also inscribes the death of the lovers within *temps qualitatif*, although the cycle of healing is broken. Most importantly it produces the final union of the lovers and so thwarts Morgain's purpose in providing Marc with the murder weapon.

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[133] TLF IX, p. 188. In the base manuscript for this edition, Vienna 2542, Tristan's fatal wound is in the *quisse*, with clear references to either his sexual transgression, re the adultery with Iseut, or to the grail tradition. Other manuscripts describe the wound as being to the *esquine*. See Harf-Lancner's introduction to TLF IX, p. 40ff.

[134] It is also worth noting that, in Thomas' version of the lovers' death, he half closes the circle, with the death of Tristan caused by Tristan Le Nain, although the fatal wound is actually inflicted by one of Estout's men. The *Prose Tristan* is more circular by having Morholt and then Marc, both evil father figures, inflict the wound.

The Love Theme: Misery in Love

The death of the lovers and much of their suffering during their lifetime are due to the misery caused by love. Indeed the main treatment of the love theme in the *Prose Tristan* would seem to be associated with the phenomenon of misery in love. Marc, of course, as well as being the jealous husband and the villain of the piece, also embodies misery in love, guaranteeing the ambivalence of his character as noted when considering him as a knight and as a king. Unable to master his feelings for Iseut he is a victim of the tyranny of love:

> Or sachiés bien que se je pooie mon cuer affrener et mener a ma volenté, je tenroie bien la partie de Dynadant, car je vauroie bien par amours amer si legierement com il fait.[135]

Palamedés also sees himself as the victim and slave of love who gets no reward for his labours and devotion:

> Amours, fait il, en grant dolour et en grant travail, en grant torment, en grant painne et en grant malaise me faites mon cors traveillier et user ma vie et finer, che m'est avis. Amours, de vous ai je travail, mais de repos je n'en ai point; dolour en ai et jour et nuit, mais de repos n'i voi je riens ne de nul assouagement. Vous me poigniées dusques u cuer et de cele pointure en truis je nule medecine. Amours, je vous ai ja donc lonc tans servi si ententiuement que je n'avoie en chestui monde nul autre signeur, fors que vous.[136]

The most tragic depiction of misery in love has to be that of Kaherdin, whose dying weeks are spent wasting away over unrequited love for Iseut. The vivid description of his loss of appetite for life echoes that of Galehot in the *Prose Lancelot*. The following passage comes after Kaherdin's final rejection by Iseut:

> Or est il mors sans nule faille et honnis en toutes manieres! Puis que sa dame li veut mal si entierement, il ne demande fors que la mort! Amours le tient si en ses las et si fort le vait maistriant qu'ele li taut le cors et l'ame, car, tout fust il ensi dans doute que Kahedins fust un des plus sages cevaliers de son aage ki fust en toute la Petite Bretaingne, a cestui point a

[135] TLF IV, p. 159.
[136] TLF IV, pp. 150-151

> il si du tout le sens perdu que il meïsmes se met a mort...Il pense tant a ceste amour k'il en laisse du tout le boire et le mengier.[137]

Significantly he spends his final three days at a fountain, another chronotopic motif, where he composes his *lai mortel*. This will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter.[138]

Tristan himself, as we have seen, also complains of the misery of love at certain points of the romance. Negative appraisals of love's contribution to life far outnumber praises of its benefits.

Of all the depictions of misery in love it is Lamorat whose situation most closely resembles that of Tristan.[139] The others are all suffering from unrequited love. Lamorat, like Tristan, enjoys the reciprocated devotion of his lady, but is in danger from third parties who do not approve of the liaison. In the case of Lamorat it is Gaheriet and his brothers, who are the sons of his lover, the Queen of Orkney, who pose the threat. Lamorat himself draws attention to the similarity of his case to Tristan's:

> Ne ma dame ne Amours ne doi je blasmer de mon grant mal, car ma dame me veut grant bien, ce sai je tout vraiement, et Amours se consent a moi... Je n'em puis blasmer fors celui ki m'eslonge de mes amours et ki me vait destourbant que je ma dame ne puis veoir. Cil me tout ma joie et mon bien. Cil me fait bien de riche povre, chil me fait tout autretel bonté, com fait li rois Marc a monsigneur Tristran, car tout autresi com li rois Marc eslonge monsigneur Tristran de ses amours, tout autresi fait moi Gaheriés, li boins chevaliers.[140]

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[137] TLF I, pp. 234-235.

[138] See also Baumgartner, 'Le personnage de Kahédin', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du moyen âge et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier, professeur à la Sorbonne, par ses collègues et ses amis*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 112, 2 vols (Genève: Droz, 1970), I, 77-82; Marie-Noëlle Toury, 'Morant d'amours: amour et mort dans le tome I du *Tristan en Prose*, in *Nouvelles recherches*, ed. by Jean Dufournet, pp. 173-190; idem, ''De Kaherdin à Kahédin: l'invention d'une personnalité' in *Et c'est la fin: Hommage à Jean Dufournet*, III, 1401-1409.

[139] Lamorat's situation was discussed above, see p. 176, in relation to the tournament at *Château du Plain*, and its aftermath.

[140] TLF IV, p. 80.

Lamorat's worst fears will come true, when, later on, his lover is slain by Gaheriet while she sleeps next to Lamorat in bed.[141] Spared on that occasion the knight himself is eventually slain by Gauvain, who true to the prose romance tradition, has become a rather ungallant and uncourtly figure.[142]

Therefore, there are two main reasons for misery in love, either that love is unrequited, or that love is opposed by the entourage of the lovers. None of the lovers flinch from their painful devotion nor do they relent throughout the romance from their quest for love. These characters who depict misery in love do not develop or evolve during the romance. The recurring scenarios, and the static mentalities of these characters, contribute to a clearly suppressed chronology within the text and an intentional circularity. Love brings no lasting happiness to any of these characters mentioned. In the end no-one is happy. Those who long to be loved in turn by their lady, Iseut, wait in vain; Tristan and Lamorat, though loved by their ladies are slain by their enemies, Marc and Gauvain, brother of Gaheriet.

Love, in the *Prose Tristan*, would seem to lead to the destruction of the lover. What is demonstrated by the above examples is the ultimate incompatibility of love and chivalry. Of course, it can be argued that the *Lancelot-Graal*, in particular the *Mort Artu*, makes a similar point with the manner in which the narrative deals with the outcome of Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery. Many have drawn attention to the incompatibility of terrestrial chivalry and celestial chivalry as depicted in the progression of the whole cycle. The *Prose Tristan* refuses to display love in a positive light at any stage. It does celebrate, however, one of the few releases from the agony of love for the characters ensnared by its force, that is, the ability to sing of their feelings. Tristan, Kaherdin, Palamedés and Lamorat all compose and perform *lais* within the text, on this subject of love.

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[141] TLF IV, p. 233.

[142] TLF IV, p. 349. For further discussion of Gauvain see: Laurence Harf-Lancner, 'Gauvain l'assassin: la récurrence d'un schéma narratif dans le *Tristan en Prose*', in *Tristan-Tristant: Mélanges en l'honneur de Danielle Buschinger*, pp. 219-230.and K. Busby, 'Gauvain in the Prose Tristan', *Tristania*, 2, number 2 (1977), 12-28.

Conclusion

Repetition is a key factor in the narrative technique of the *Prose Tristan*. The above examples show how it is used both as a centralising and decentralising force in the romance. The doubling of characters contributes to the fragmentation of the main character, Tristan, and ultimately contributes to the subversive tendency in our text, that is, the tendency to undermine the tradition of the *Lancelot-Graal* which has gone before it. Important relationships emerge in the text, between protagonists and the kingdoms they represent. The opposition between Logres and Cornwall, set up as being a straightforward dichotomy of good and evil on one level, soon appears more complicated when looked at closely. There is a gradual undermining of Logres, which takes place over the course of the narrative, be it through the dissenting voice of Dinadan, or surprising victories by Marc over knights of the Round Table. This is accompanied by sporadic rehabilitation of Cornwall's reputation. As a hero Tristan was shown to be destabilised in his shifting roles in relation to other characters. This was identified as a centrifugal, anti-generic tendency.

However, if any message or ideology is to be gleaned from a text a certain amount of coherence is also needed; otherwise it becomes incomprehensible. Continuity and the reiteration of themes, through recurring motifs, constitute an important organisational force in the *Prose Tristan*. The repetition of these scenarios creates an impression of circularity in the text and could be likened to *temps qualitatif*, endowing events with significance which is outside the linear chronology of cause and effect. The recurring motifs may evolve and be nuanced in relation to developments in the narrative situation, but they contribute to a certain suppression of chronology in tension with the linear biographical thread of the romance. This impression of sheer simultaneity is akin to *temps qualitatif*, albeit, in the *Prose Tristan,* the redeeming eschatology of the Grail is lacking, replaced by the final union of the lovers, inherited from the verse tradition. It is the brutality of tournaments, the undermining of the chivalric ideal, the frailty of human healing powers and the misery of love, which envelop the characters. These recurring scenarios allow the narrator to reinforce themes which are of considerable importance, and which run through the romance like Ariadne's thread in

the Minotaur's labyrinth. The inter-textual echoing of motifs from the wider romance tradition, and the juxtaposition of interpolated passages verbatim from the *Lancelot-Graal*, enhance the impact of the text and add another voice to the debate surrounding the nature, and state, of chivalry in the *Prose Tristan*.

Chapter Five

Multiple Voices and Speech Types

Introduction

In the previous chapters we studied the narrative technique in the *Prose Tristan,* concentrating on the role of the narratorial *je,* the text's chronology, and the use of repetition, mainly doubling and recurring motifs, as a structuring device throughout the romance. It was shown how the *Prose Tristan* is a text subject to both centripetal and centrifugal forces, and displays features of dialogism. The narratorial *je* may appear to dominate, but is, in fact, challenged by *li contes,* and the voices of characters. The narratorial role is a disconcerting one, both guiding the audience and, at the same time, undermining expectations. The chronology is governed by both *temps quantitatif* and *qualitatif.* Gaps in the narrative and subversion of linear chronology are techniques more readily associated with the twentieth-century *nouveau roman.* We demonstrated how many of the relationships within the text are dialogic, with much over-lapping and merging of boundaries involving themes and characterisation. In this chapter, our focus will be the relationships between speech types and voices which emerge within the *Prose Tristan,* both the voice of the narrator and those of the characters. The aim is to consider whether these voices, which may embody different genres, remain quite separate from one another, as though they were independent units grafted onto the base text, or whether they interact and influence one another within the context of the romance, leading to a merging of styles, a hybridisation. According to Bakhtin one of the distinguishing features of novelistic writing is the phenomenon of several stylistic unities' being contained within one text:

> The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. In it the investigator is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls.
>
> We list below the basic types of compositional-stylistic unities...:

1. Direct authorial literary-artistic narration (in all its diverse variants);
2. Stylisation of the various forms of oral everyday narration (*skaz*);
3. Stylisation of the various forms of semi-literary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary, etc.);
4. Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth);
5. The stylistically individualised speech of characters.[1]

Category 2, *skaz*, is not relevant to the *Prose Tristan*. Bakhtin, does, however, identify *skaz* in fabliaux:

> In the subsequent history of European prose, double-voiced discourse is worked out (as had been the case in ancient times) in the minor epic genres (*fabliaux, Schwänke*, minor parodic genres), out of the mainstream of the great chivalric romance. In such contexts are those basic types and subgenres of double-voiced discourse developed that later begin to determine style in great novels of the Second Type: the style of parodic discourse – ironic, comic, *skaz* and so on – in all its degrees and nuances.[2]

Apart from the brief interlude which involves Marc conversing with some shepherds during Tristan's *folie*, there is little or no evidence in our text of such stylisation of speech, that is what the formalists called *skaz*. There would perhaps be scope for Category 4, what Bakhtin calls 'extra-artistic authorial speech', if we were to undertake a closer reading of the passages from the *Queste del Saint Graal*, which involve interpretation and glossing of events by hermits, whom knights encounter on their wanderings. There is of course a debate as to whether anything in literature could or should be considered 'extra-artistic'. These so-called 'extra-artistic' forms, have to be considered as representations, or illusions of 'extra-artistic' material within the framework of the narrative. It has to be recognised that their very presence within the fiction affects this 'extra-artistic' status, but also that they do provide a mixture of discourse within the narrative framework. Bakhtin's concept of polyphony is a similar case in point. In polyphony, the narrator creates the impression, or illusion, of separate voices within the narrative, but the audience knows that ultimately these

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[1] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 261-262.
[2] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 400.

different voices are subsumed under a unified authorial will. The debate centres on intra-diegetic dynamics, that is the relationship between discourse and speakers within the narrative itself.

Of the five above categories, numbers 1, 3 and 5 will be the most important for our argument.

We will firstly look at the narrator's speech, encompassing the narration of events, indirect discourse and descriptions, such as those of tournaments. Secondly we will consider the direct speech of characters in prose dialogues. Finally we will examine the direct speech of characters as it is represented by the generic insertions, the main inserted genre being the Arthurian *lai*, concluding with a discussion of prose monologues by characters.

We will be using the terms of heteroglossia and polyphony with respect to the different voices and styles in the text:

> Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia (*raznorecie*) can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogised).[3]

By dialogised heteroglossia, Bakhtin means the interanimation and interaction of different speech types, that is, the influence they have on one another. In this context heteroglossia is being used as a term which indicates that different speech styles are being employed. These differences may be rooted in social difference, but not necessarily.

Many commentators have chosen to concentrate on the social dimension of Bakhtin's argument, which is very important, but not the only issue to be considered. Speech types may also refer to ways of speaking within a homogenous social context. In

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[3] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination,* p. 263.

'Discourse in the Novel' Bakhtin cites the example of a peasant using several languages in his everyday life.[4] He prays to God in one language, sings songs in another, speaks to his family in a third, can also employ somebody to use legal language on his behalf, and so on. Using the different languages at different times, for specific purposes, the peasant considers each language perfectly adequate in its context. However, in contrast, another peasant might be capable of regarding one language through the eyes of another, for example, approaching the language of everyday life through the language of prayer and song, or the reverse. When this happens, the value systems and the world views in these languages come to interact; they interanimate each other as they enter into dialogue. It then becomes difficult to take for granted the value system of a particular language, as it has been challenged, however cautiously. In fact, this dialogising of languages is always going on, and so when words attract tones and meaning from the languages of heteroglossia, they are often attracting already dialogised meanings.[5]

Following this example, therefore, we can justify discussing heteroglossia within the relatively homogenous social context of chivalric romance. Within this social group, that is courtly society, there are different situations which produce different speech types, such as the language of combats and the language of love.

In a wider context, one could also apply this principle to the use of prose for romances in the thirteenth century. The deliberate use of prose for a fiction challenges the traditional usage of prose for chronicles and objective writing, and will change the face of both prose and fiction. The style of the *Lancelot-Graal* would seem to be more influenced by this association with the style of chronicles than the prose style of the *Prose Tristan*, which is more akin to the prose of novelness, influenced by the multiple discourses around it. The main focus of our discussion will be the relationship between the inserted genre of the Arthurian *lai* and the continuous prose which is its framing context.

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[4] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination,*, pp. 296 ff.
[5] See Morson and Emerson, *Creation of a Prosaics*, pp. 290ff for further discussion of this.

The organisation of these different speech types into voices also raises the issue of polyphony, as we try to establish whether there is a dominant voice or discourse in the text, represented by the narrator or another character, inextricably bound to the authorial will:

> ...monological unity is broken when the accents of the hero's self-consciousness are in fact objectivised and when in the work itself a distance between the hero and the author is maintained. If the umbilical cord binding the hero to his creator is not cut, then we have before us not a work of art, but a personal document.
> ... In a monological design the hero is closed and the limits of his meaning are sharply outlined... he cannot exceed the boundaries of his character, his typicality and his temperament...[6]

It is here that we can find a link between polyphony and dialogue. Polyphony exists, within the limits of literary creation of course, if the author manages to create the impression of the existence of separate consciousnesses and wills. This encourages the development of ideas and a dialogue of ideas within the literary work:

> An idea does not live in one person's isolated individual consciousness – if it remains there it degenerates and dies. An idea begins to live i.e. to take shape, to develop... only when it enters into genuine dialogical relationships with other, foreign, ideas. Human thought becomes genuine thought, i.e. an idea, only under the conditions of a living contact with another foreign thought, embodied in the voice of another person... The sphere of its existence is not the individual consciousness, but the dialogical intercourse between consciousnesses.[7]

Therefore we shall aim to assess to what extent different voices in the *Prose Tristan*, embodying different ideologies, contribute to the shaping of thought and the genesis of ideas. For the text to be truly polyphonic no one voice must dominate.

We shall begin our discussion of the different voices in the *Prose Tristan* by examining that of the narrator.

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[6] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 41 ff.
[7] Bakthin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 272.

Narrator's Speech

By narrator's speech we mean any action or event described by the narrator and also characters' indirect speech, which is used in conjunction with the direct speech of the characters. Indirect speech is in fact a hybrid, where two voices are heard, those of narrator and character, giving greater scope for irony.

The introductions to the respective volumes of the TLF edition provide us with a useful guide to the main linguistic characteristics of the base manuscript being used.[8] Some main points are agreed upon by all editors. It has been ascertained that the Vienna 2542 manuscript was produced by a scribe from Picardy who was aware of the need to cater for a wider audience probably more familiar with *francien*. The text displays standard usage of Old French for the late thirteenth century in its use of constructions and tenses. Some areas picked out include the continued use of the declension system, frequent switches between past and present tenses for narration of events, frequent use of the conjunction *et* at the beginning of a phrase, and the introduction of concessive clauses by the adverb *tout*.

To date the *Prose Tristan* has not been praised for its narrative style. Baumgartner is far from complimentary in her assessment of it.

> Le *Tristan en Prose* donne presque continûment l'impression d'être écrit dans une langue au vocabulaire pauvre, dont les structures syntaxiques sont simples, pour ne pas dire rudimentaires, et où les effets stylistiques sont rares. ...
>
> A l'examen, l'écriture d'un passage narratif quelconque du *Tristan en Prose* présente donc les caractéristiques suivantes: simplicité et uniformité

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[8] For detailed studies of the language of the text see:
TLF I, pp. 19-32.
TLF II, pp 19-31.
TLF III, pp 24-38.
TLF IV, pp. 47-55.
The editors of the subsequent volumes refer the reader back to these four volumes for a description of language in the text, adding a few examples themselves, referring specifically to the portion of the manuscript they are editing.

> de la structure syntaxique, uniformité qu'accentue encore la fréquence du coordonnant neutre ET; simplicité et banalité du lexique utilisé; rareté des effets proprement stylistiques, les seuls procédés mis en oeuvre étant soit l'utilisation fréquente du groupement binaire ou ternaire de termes appartenant au même champ sémantique, soit la répétition de termes particulièrement signifiants dans le contexte[9].

According to this criticism, the narrator's speech would not seem to be very innovative, nor does it depart from the accepted style of prose romances in the thirteenth century. Baumgartner would seem to be intimating that the objective origins of chronicle prose are perhaps dictating a certain sobriety where the narrator is concerned. We aim to show that this is not always the case.

Descriptions

One area which allows the narrator of the *Prose Tristan* to exercise more imagination is that of the descriptions which intersperse the apparently bland prose, and in which the narrator takes great delight. Baumgartner sees the narrator's descriptive tendencies and attention to detail as the approach of a realist. She remarks on the references to objects of everyday life such as scenery, castles and fountains, or even what people are wearing.[10] Descriptions, as was noted in Chapter three, also contribute to the variation of tempo of narration, creating the impression of duration.

The narrator's attention to detail means that potentially repetitive scenes and motifs all have their own nuance and emphasis. It facilitates the intermingling of themes and motifs, such as Tristan's and Palamedés' rivalry at the tournament scenes, which punctuate the text. Tournaments as a recurring motif, with recurring themes, were discussed in the previous chapter. Description can be either of events or of objects.

Description of Events

Of the seven tournaments which appear throughout the *Prose Tristan* two in particular are given very detailed coverage, the tournament at *Château des Pucelles*

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[9] Baumgartner, *Essai,* pp. 285-287, and pp. 308-316.
[10] Baumgartner, *Essai,* pp. 390 ff. See also the introduction to Curtis III, pp. XII ff.

and the one at Louveserp. What is of interest to us here is the way in which the narrator chooses to relate the events to the audience. The *Château des Pucelles* tournament is Tristan's first major opportunity to gain recognition in Logres. It is announced not long after his arrival there, as taking place 10 days from then, and several pages on, allowing ample time for tension and expectation to build up.[11] The announcement of the tournament is quickly followed by a return to Iseut in Cornwall who sends a female messenger to Logres to obtain news of Tristan's welfare and whereabouts. The tournament combat itself is an all-male domain, but this switch back to Iseut also prepares the audience for the important participation of female characters in the overall event.

Baumgartner also comments on the switching of perspectives as the key to the variety of descriptions:

> On pourrait multiplier les exemples; mais ce très rapide survol... suffit à montrer que le prosateur a su varier la présentation de scènes où la monotonie est souvent de règle, moins en modifiant la structure traditionnelle du combat chevaleresque, qu'en accumulant les détails qui dépeignent la personnalité et les réactions des combattants ou des spectateurs.[12]

When the time for the tournament finally comes, there is detailed reference to the importance of the presence of female spectators:

> A celui tans estoit coustume, ne nus ne l'osast autrement faire, que cascuns haus hom et cascuns cevaliers errans, s'il avoit moullier, il l'i menoit une fois u deus u trois avoec lui cascun an pour veoir les assamblees; et se il avoit amie u damoisele, il li convenoit par fin estouvoir k'il l'i menast. Et toutes les dames de haut pris, roïnes, ducoises et contesses convenoit par coustume qu'eles alaissent as assamblees; et cele ki n'i aloit, a grant orgoeil et a grant mauvaistié li estoit atourné de cascun. Pour cele coustume que je vous di, que on ne laisast a celui tans en nule maniere du monde, estoit venue au Castel as Puceles la roïne Genievre, et toutes les gentiex dames du roiaume de Logres i estoient autresi venues. Les loges u eles devoient venir pour regarder le

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[11] TLF II, p. 171.
[12] Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 316.

> tournoiement estoient toutes apareillies pour rechevoir si hautes dames conme eles estoient toutes.[13]

The presence of the women adds an extra dimension to the scene, and visually the audience is invited to assume their vantage point, to picture events from their perspective:

> La roïne n'i estoit pas encore venue, mais ele i vint tout maintenant a grant compaingnie de chevaliers et de dames et de damoiseles, et monta lasus; ne encore adonc n'estoit mie li tournoiements enconmenciés. Et saciés que a celui point que la roïne fu montee es loges amont, vous peüssiés veoir par mi la praerie plus de .CC. chevaliers...[14]

This reference to what the queen actually sees facilitates the switch in perspective, and turns attention to what the narrator considers to be the most important and interesting aspect of the tournament, the combat between the knights. These combats receive the most focused attention from the narrator, with other elements complementing them, by setting the overall scene.

> Quant Blyoblerys de vit que li hiraut aloient ensi criant pour monsigneur Tristran et pour Persidés, il se met esranment avant d'une part et li rois de Norgales d'autre, et mipartissent la jouste en tele maniere que Blyoblerys laisse courre a monsigneur Tristran et li rois de Norgales a Persidés. Li rois, ki boins cevaliers estoit et fors de grant forche, fiert Persidés de si grant forche et si durement que Persidés n'a pooir k'il en la sele se puisse tenir, ains vole des archons a tere mout cruelment, et est de celui caoir se durement estourdis k'il n'a pooir k'il se reliet, ains gist illuec ausi conme mors.... Et mesire Tristrans, ki ne reconnoist pas que che soit Blyoblerys a qui il doit jouster, laisse courre par mi les rens, tant com il puet du ceval traire, et fiert en son venir Blyoblerys si durement k'il l'abat a tere et lui et le ceval, et fait tout voler en un mont et l'un et l'autre.
>
> ...Et mesire Tristrans, quant il a som poindre parfurni, tire le frain de son ceval et retourne, et lors regarde et voit que li rois de Norgales, ki Persidés avoit abatu, fu ja retournés, tous apareilliés de jouster une autre fois, s'il fust ki avant venist. Quant il voit monsigneur Tristran, ki ensi avoit Blyoblerys abatu, il dist que a chestui veut il jouster... et pour ce laissent li courre par mi les rens li uns encontre l'autre, au ferir des

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[13] TLF II, pp. 248-249.
[14] TLF II, pp. 274-275.

> esperons, les glaives baissiés. Et quant ce vient au parataindre, il s'entrefierent si durement de toutes lour forces que cascuns, endroit soi, se tient assés carchié du caup k'il vait recevant. Mais li rois, ki n'est pas si fors ne si boins cevalers d'assés com mesire Tristrans estoit, fu ferus si asprement a chel encontre k'il n'a force ne pooir k'il en sele se puisse tenir, ains vole des archons a tere mout felenessement, si k'il est de celui caoir plus estourdis et estonnés qu'il ne vausist.[15]

Without giving detailed physical descriptions of individuals, male or female, the narrator nonetheless creates a vivid image of the proceedings, and does not omit to relate the physical hardships involved in such assemblies for the knights involved.

Atmospheric details include the due attention given to the noise level at a tournament:

> A celui point lieve la criee grans et merveilleuse.[16]

Similarly:

> Li cris i est fors et si grans et la noise si merveilleuse et li fereïs des espees si fors que on n'i oïst Dieu tonnant.[17]

Not losing the opportunity to inject some humour into the proceedings, the narrator portrays Tristan at one point replying to Dinadan's caustic remarks the best way he can, by the sword. Reference is also made to the fact that, despite his cynicism, Dinadan is a good knight:

> Dynadant, som boin compaingnon entre les autres, ki celui soir, sans faille, avoit ja assés fait d'armes; et encore em baoit il plus a faire, com chil ki, a la verité dire, estoit boins cevaliers et preus. Tout maintenant que mesire Tristrans coisist Dynadant, il nel mesconnoist mie, anchois le reconnoist mout bien; et pour la parole que Dynadans li avoit dite le jour devant, se traist il pres de lui, l'espee entesee, et li donne par mi le hiaume un si grant caup que chil en est si durement estourdis k'il ne set s'il est u nuis u jours.[18]

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[15] TLF II, pp. 253-255.
[16] TLF II, p. 255.
[17] TLF II, p. 283.
[18] TLF II, p. 257.

The narrator also introduces behind-the-scene elements to the tournament, with a description of the camps set up:

> Et sachiés que a celui point peüssiés veoir en cele praerie plus de mil paveillons tendus, si biaus, si cointes et si riches que se li uns estoit biaus a eslire, et li autres encore plus.[19]

This technique is one of implied inexpressibility, where the narrator does not describe but invokes a rivalry of abstract beauty. The audience of the text is left to imagine from his or her own resources.

The device of bringing together different narrative threads allows the audience to follow carefully the different themes being explored, such as the rivalry between different knights, the quest for Tristan, and the interest of Guinevere in Iseut. The rivalry between Tristan and Palamedés, played out on the tournament scene throughout the romance, has already been discussed. Indeed the caustic remarks made by Dinadan to Tristan referred to the instance of Palamedés catching Tristan off guard just prior to the tournament at *Château des Pucelles*. The tension between Tristan and his Saracen rival is further brought out in the narration and variety of descriptive processes of the Louveserp tournament.

The tournament of Louveserp marks the apogee of Tristan's chivalric career. It is his second departure to Logres and this time he has Iseut with him, having escaped from Marc's clutches. Arthur calls the tournament in an attempt to get Tristan and Iseut together at a public event. The lovers are fully honoured and accepted in the Arthurian world. The happiness of the occasion is reinforced by the pleasant conditions surrounding their departure for the plains of Louveserp:

> Quant il sont de la roce descendu, il se partent de la Joiouse Garde et tant font k'il viennent au grant cemin et cevaucent cele matinee le petit pas, juant et soulagant et parlant de plusieurs aventures. Mais bien saciés que madame Yseut cevauçoit si noblement apareillie de toutes les coses qui a gentil dame couvenoient que on n'avoit piecha mais veüe nule dame plus

[19] TLF II, p. 264.

> gentieument cevaucier ne si ricement. Dynadans et Gaheriés cevauchoient devant, tout armé ensi com vous avés oï; les dames chevauchoient aprés, et li esquier d'encoste, li un d'une part et li autre d'autre. Mesire Tristrans et Palamidés cevauchoient tout deriere.[20]

The scene is idyllic, as they leave the *Joyeuse Garde* with all the expectation and excitement of the tournament to come. As yet, Palamedés' hopes remain high, and his camaraderie with Tristan is emphasised, rather than their enmity. The procession is hierarchical and in many ways resembles a liturgical procession, which would have acolytes leading the way, in this instance represented by Gaheriet and Dinadan. If it were a procession of the blessed sacrament, this would be mounted and surrounded/escorted on all sides, such as Iseut is by the squires. The most important clergy, such as bishops would be at the back of the procession, in this case, represented by Tristan and Palamedés, with no stated hierarchy between them. The impression is that they are advancing side by side. This scene of harmony and unity among the courtly entourage will contrast with the dispersion, division and fragmentation of the group by the end of the tournament. As with the description of characters involved in the tournament of *Château des Pucelles*, there is little attention paid to physical details of the characters. Iseut's beauty and sumptuous attire are evoked, but the detail is left to the imagination of the audience.

Palamedés' happiness is doomed to be short-lived. Over the following hundred pages the narrator relates the gradual demise of Palamedés' fortunes in the tournament. The rivalry with Tristan and his desire to be recognised in front of Iseut make the pain of failure all the more intense. The narrator goes to great lengths to show his joy and torment, along with the trials and tribulations of other participating knights. Palamedés is so inspired he even defeats Lancelot in single combat:

> Ensi assamblent li doi cevalier par grant estrif li uns encontre l'autre et par grant doutance. Mais ensi avint a celui point que Palamidés n'avoit point de glaive, et Lanselos en tenoit un un court et gros. Palamidés, ki a celui point estoit ausi com tous avulés de hardement, n'a nule doutance du

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[20] TLF V, p. 234, See also Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 310.

> glaive et bien le moustre a celui point, car, quant Lanselos le quide porter par tere, Palamidés hauce l'espee et caupe le glaive par mi. Li caus fu grans et fu venus par force et de haut. A ce k'il trueve le ceval desarmé, il li donne par mi la teste un si grant caup k'il le fait a tere trebuscier si durement c'onques puis ne s'en releva.
>
> Li cevaus ciet et Lanselos saut outre, si revient sour ses piés droitement.[21]

Lancelot is soon avenged by the intervention of Hector, who, in turn, unseats Palamedés. The tournament has started painfully, but successfully, for Palamedés and the narrator draws attention to the physical hardship experienced by all.[22]

Later, the focus is on the single combat between Tristan and Palamedés, incorporating the perspective of the onlooking Iseut:

> Mesire Tristrans a laissiés tous autres pour Palamidés seulement; lui seul veut il honnir, s'il puet...
> ...
> Grans est l'estrif et la rancune des deus compaingons a cestui point...
> ...
> Et la roïne Yseut, ki as fenestres des loges estoit, savoit tout certainnement que ce estoit Palamidés ki a monsigneur Tristan se combatoit...La u ele regardoit cele bataille et ele les reconnissoit bien ambesdeus, ele estoit tant irie et tant courecie durement c'a poi que ele ne moroit de doeil, car ele savoit bien certainnement que Palamidés estoit cevaliers de si haute prouece k'il n'estoit mie hom que autres cevaliers peüst metre au desous sans mout grant peril.[23]

However, the final blow for Palamedés will come at the end of the tournament, when he is officially declared as having been outfought by Tristan and Lancelot:

> Quant Palamidés entent kil vont ensi parlant de lui et k'il vont desprisant son fait, il esrage de doeil et d'ire. Il est orendroit si dolans k'il vauroit illuec estre ocis, pour che k'il voit k'il avoit a cestui point perdu son travail et sa painne... Quant il connoist k'il avoit tout perdu... il n'i fait autre delaiance, ains vient a son ceval et monte maugrés de tous ses anemis et se part du tournoiement mout durement plourant et faisant le

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[21] TLF V, p. 290.
[22] See TLF V, p. 285 for a litany of injured knights in the tournament, as quoted above in Chapter Four, p. 174.
[23] TLF V, p. 334.

greigneur doeil que onques cevaliers feïst.[24]

As already stated, what makes the coverage of potentially monotonous events so interesting is the narrator's ability to alter perspective and to switch our attention from individual concerns to the collective experience, as well as the switch in perspective. As we have seen, the narration of Palamedés' and Tristan's combat involves a switch to the onlooking Iseut. Lancelot's fall at the hands of Palamedés involves a switch to the onlookers and to his kinsman, Hector, who comes to avenge him. The interspersing of references to the scale and richness of the event evokes the collective nature of the tournament, as do the discussions at the end as to who is the victor.

Description of Places and Objects

In the tournament scenes, apart from describing the combat of the knights, the narrator does not give detailed description of the physical traits of the characters involved. He evokes the beauty of the ladies and the sumptuousness of the pavilions, leaving the rest to the imagination of the audience.

There are some locations which are subject to more detailed description. The narrator would seem to take delight in setting the scene. Fountains are a recurring chronotopic motif. Wandering knights will come across them, usually in a clearing in the forest. As a location they seem to encourage meditation and reflection, sometimes in monologue, at others, in dialogue. In the following example, Tristan has been travelling in Logres, and, taking a well-deserved rest, will soon be joined by Iseut's messenger from Cornwall:

> La u il aloit encore cevauçant par la forest pour soi rafresquir un poi, il li avint adonc qu'il trouva a l'entree d'une praerie une mout bele fontainne, qui sourdoit entre deus grans arbres. Mesire Tristrans descendi lors k'il ot trouvee la fontainne, et pense k'il se reposera illuec une piece... Quant il est descendus, il atace son ceval a un arbre et met son escu et son glaive illuec devant, puis oste son hiaume et s'espee et met tout devant lui, puis

[24] TLF V, pp. 368-369.

> leve les mains et son vis et boit aprés de la fontainne. Et quant il a beü a son plaisir, il s'asiet devant la fontainne et conmence adonc a penser mout durement. Et quant il a une grant pieche pensé, mas et dolans de grant maniere, il s'endort com chil ki auques estoit lassés et traveilliés.[25]

As with the description of the tournament pavilions and spectators, the narrator extols the beauty of the fountain without going into the actual detail of its appearance.

This is a common practice for the narrator when knights arrive at a fountain.[26] The description of the place is abstract, leaving the audience to use their imagination to fill in the detail.

The same could be said for references to bridges, water and castles, as depicted during Marc and Dinadan's adventures together:

> Au soir, entour eure de vespres, les aporta lour cemins devant une grant aigue noire et parfonde merveilleusement et lee assés. Et d'autre part, dedens chele aigue avoit un castel assés bel et assés riche, ki estoit proprement de Tor, le fils Arés... Et sachiés que, desus cele grant aigue u li doi cevalier vinrent adonc ki s'aloient ensi gabant, estoit li pons que Drians gardoit. Et il avoit u chief du pont de l'autre part, devers le castel, une tour ausi com pour enforceir le pont...
>
> Quand li doi chevalier vinrent au pont, il regardoient que desus la tour avoit un penonchel de cendal desour une lanche, si reconnurent esranment que la estoit li chevaliers ki le pont gardoit.[27]

Again, apart from having the overall layout described, the audience is spared the precise details of the two edifices. Suffice it to say that everything is on a grand and impressive scale. The emphasis, as with previous descriptions, is more on setting the scene, atmospherically; here the water is dark and there is an intimidating air surrounding the castle which is guarded by the mysterious knight. The description of

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[25] TLF II, p. 213.
[26] For example, see also TLF IV, p. 75, 'une mout bele fontainne, ki estoit a l'entree d'une praerie, auques pres d'une forest' and p. 137, 'une mout bele fontainne ki sourdoit entre grans arbres, et estoit chil lieus mout biaus et mout delitable u la fontainne sourdoit'.
[27] TLF IV, pp. 97-98.

the two knights' approach is also detailed, in much the same fashion as Tristan's approach to the fountain was.

There are some more vivid descriptions, with more concrete details than the passages quoted.[28] These include references to Tristan's appearance when he is with the shepherds, suffering from his *folie*, references to Palamedés's wretchedness, as he pines away from unrequited love; and the procession of Tristan and Iseut to the *Joyeuse Garde*, which has been considered earlier as a description of events. It cannot be denied that there are some concrete details in the text, and some detailed scene-setting passages, yet they would seem more to function as setting up important events, secondary to action, rather than being an aesthetic end in themselves.

A significant exception to this is the description of the Grail, as witnessed by Bohort, and interpolated from the *Prose Lancelot*, earlier in the same volume:

> Mais toute voies regarda il tant en la cambre qu'il vit une table d'argent qui estoit desus .IIII. fuissiaus. Mais li fuisel estoient si bel et si rice com cil qui tout estoient avironné d'or; mais encore estoit cascuns plus merveilleus si conme la devine escriture du Saint Graal le devise et devisera quant il en sera liex et tans. Desus la table d'argent estoit li Sains Graaus couvers d'un samit tout blanc, et devant la table avoit un viel home revestu en huise d'evesque, si estoit as jenous. Et quant il i ot demouré une grant piece, si se drecha en son estant et vint droitement au Saint Vaissel. Et maintenant i ot si grant clarté que de greigneur ne poroie je parler.[29]

However, the subsequent description of the feast on the eve of Pentecost at Arthur's court, definitely evokes more than it describes:

> Or dist li contes que, la veille de Pentecouste que cele biauté assamblee fu dedens Camaalot, se la fuissiés, signeur cevalier, assés i peüssiés veoir houneur et pris et cevalerie et hautece et gloire de tous, car bien saciés que a cele feste furent .XII. roi, qui tout i porterent couronne et qui tout tenoient tere du roi Artu. Li rois Artus fu li tresimes. Illuec peüst on bein

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[28] See Baumgartner, *Essai*, pp. 309-310.
[29] TLF VI, p. 147.

> veoir la biauté des dames et le buebant. A cele fest vint sans faille tous li orgex et toute la flour de cevalerie terrienne. Onques puis ne fu si rice court ne jamais ne sera si rice.[30]

It is worth noting in passing, that the miniature depicting this scene, taken from the Paris BN f. fr. 336 manuscript, shown on the facing page in the TLF VI, displays similarly sketchy qualities.

We conclude therefore, that the descriptive procedures in the *Prose Tristan*, be they of events, places or characters, leave much to the imagination of the audience. Given the wealth of the romance tradition the audience would have been steeped in, and the assumption of their familiarity with the conventions of those earlier narratives, the narrator allows them to construct their own details. On the other hand, great care is taken to evoke the atmosphere and setting of events, and, in certain instances, to observe in detail the movements of the characters.

Indirect Speech

Another important narrative device in romance, which is pointed out by Segre, is the use of indirect speech, which is also the voice of the narrator.[31] We have seen above how some of the descriptions involve narration of sentiments and reactions, expressed in indirect speech by the narrator. Segre singles out the subtle use of verbs such as *cuidier, penser* and *veoir* in romance discourse, which allows the narrator to be distanced from or identified more closely with characters in their speech and actions.[32] Rychner has commented on the use of *cuidier* with the subjunctive as the narrator conveying that the character is mistaken in their perception. *Penser* with the indicative implies a correct judgement.[33] This would imply that it is the narrator who

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[30] TLF VI, p. 237.
[31] Segre, 'What Bakhtin left unsaid', p. 35.
[32] Segre, 'What Bakhtin left unsaid', p. 29.
[33] See Jean Rychner, *La Narration des sentiments, des pensées et des discours dans quelques oeuvres des XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 192 (Genève: Droz, 1990), p. 105.

is controlling and influencing the characters and hence the audience.

This switch in voices between narrator and character also adds to the richness of the narrative process:

> Ce qui étoffe la structure quelque peu linéaire du récit, ce qui lui donne la richesse d'une composition en quelque sorte polyphonique, ce sont aussi les variations qui explorent les différentes facettes des événements relatés. A la voix du narrateur se mêle, en effet, la voix des personnages... Ainsi vont constamment de pair récit et commentaire, le second, comme en contrepoint, explicitant le premier et lui apportant un éclairage moral, affectif ou psychologique.[34]

Before looking more closely at examples of direct speech by characters it would be worth highlighting some examples of indirect speech in the romance.

Along with description, indirect speech, encompassing also the narration of thoughts and sentiments, is the main vehicle for the voice of the narrator to be heard in the romance. Talking of 'free indirect speech' or *style indirect libre*, in Old French is problematic because the tense shifts typical of the style in the nineteenth century cannot be relied on as indicators. In *style indirect libre* the syntax is the speaker's; only the flow from narratorial comment reveals the presence of the narrator explicitly filtering the words of the character. Christine Ferlampin points out the use of indirect discourse for monologues, rather than a soliloquy, as was found in the verse romances:

> Le monologue intérieur est toujours exprimé au style indirect subordonné ou libre: le style direct impliquerait une prononciation affective. Ce discours est introduit par *dire a soi meisme, dire en soi meisme, dire endroit soi meïsmes*.[35]

This style may be appropriate to a narration of sentiments of the character, but it is

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[34] TLF IV, Introduction, p. 50.
[35] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues dans le *Tristan en Prose*', in *Nouvelles recherches,* ed. by Dufournet, pp. 81-121 (p. 103).

also an opportunity for the narrator to interpret or gloss events, thereby imposing a particular view on the audience. For example, when Tristan is banished from Cornwall, the narrator comments on the feelings of both the lovers, inserting a personal opinion along the way:

> La roïne pleure et souspire et demainne son dueil toute jour. Mais se ele demainne son doeil grant et merveilleus pour le departement de son ami, cil pour qui ele se tourmente n'est mie mains tourmentés endroit soi, mais plus encore, selonc mon escient.[36]

As Rychner says:

> La troisième personne... est au fond plus, pour moi, le narrateur que le personnage.[37]

However, there can be a degree of double-voiced discourse in these passages, that is where the narrator can be seen to be using the language of another.[38] A clear example of the narrator appropriating the character's speech is found in TLF IV, after Marc has been humiliated by Dinadan's *lai voir disant*, and blames Tristan for the whole episode:

> De cestui lay que chis harpa en tel maniere, voiant tous ciaus de Cornuaille, fu li rois March si durement troublés k'il ne set k'il doie dire... Et quant il a grant piece pensé a ceste cose, il ne li est pas avis que Dynadans eüst si mal cuer vers lui... Tristrans, ses nies, a fait cest lay, nul autres ne l'a fait sans faille. Or voit il tout apertement que Tristrans li veut mal de mort et k'il bee a sa deshounour en toutes guises, ne il ne puet si sa deshounour metre avant en nule maniere du monde com il a fait a ceste fois... Onques pour le fait du Saissoigne n'i ait fiance ne pour la bonté qu'il fist a cele fois, car ja pour ce ne remanra k'il ne le mete a la mort, s'il onques puet.[39]

Here, the narrator is clearly the speaker, grammatically, but he uses words such as

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[36] TLF II, p. 76.
[37] Rychner, *La Narration*, p. 8.
[38] See Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination,* p. 303.
[39] TLF IV, pp. 347-348.

mort and *deshounour*, which clearly appropriate and re-use words strongly associated with Marc's view.

When the narrator is dealing with reported speech, words supposedly uttered out loud by the character, there is often a mixing of direct and indirect speech, rather than free indirect speech. The following example with Palamedés is an example of this mixture of indirect and direct discourse:

> De ceste nouvele est mout liés Palamidés; mout li plaist et mout li est boin que mesire Tristrans soit hors de Cornuaille et k'il soit repairiés en Loenoys: or ira il en Cornuaille plus seürement et plus joiousement k'il ne faisoit quant mesire Tristrans i demouroit. Il li est bien avis k'il n'ot onques damage en nul lieu du monde ne anui se ne fu par monsigneur Tristran; mesire Tristrans l'a mort et mis a doeil; mesire Tristrans si l'a honni du tout. Lors parole a la damoisele et dist a cief de piece: "Damoisele..."[40]

Here, the narrator deliberately uses terms and vocabulary associated with Palamedés' well documented resentment of Tristan, *mort, doeil, honni,* appropriating his unhappy language and thereby reinforcing the unhappiness of the character. This is an example of a shift into narrated discourse, that is, we cannot tell whether what comes after the semi-colon before 'mesire Tristrans l'a mort...' belongs to the narrator or to Palamedés. The same is true of the sentence beginning 'or ira...'. This shifting focus makes it difficult to establish a hierarchy of personae. If it is the narrator speaking, this could be seen as an example of Bakhtinian double-voiced discourse, as the narrator's own speech is saturated with the emotion and intentions of Palamedés.

Rychner argues that often the passage from indirect to direct speech serves to reinforce and confirm what has gone before:

> Plus fréquemment, le narrateur donne en direct une conclusion plus vive et plus personnelle, qui reconduit le lecteur à la voix du sujet et lui donne l'impression, et la preuve en quelque sorte, qu'il a bien entendu son

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[40] TLF II, p. 201.

discours indirect pour lui donner son commentaire intime.[41]

Rychner hints at the potential for dialogue, which could also be interpreted in the Bakhtinian sense, in such instances:

> Le narrateur dans une situation de dialogue actuel, cède la parole franchement au sujet; il ne s'agit évidemment pas de discours indirect libre, mais de discours indirect et de discours direct, dont l'énonciation respective ne fait pas de problème.[42]

This is scope for double-voiced discourse in these passages. There are occasions when the narrator's voice is shot through with the sentiments of the characters. However, the relationship between narrator and character in the above examples is not one of polyphony. The narrator's voice would appear to be dominant. The narrator manipulates the audience as regards the narration of sentiment. Even when there is a mixture of direct and indirect speech, the audience is subject to what the narrator decides to report fully and which words are summarised and glossed. The reported speech sets the tone, which is then confirmed by the character's own intervention. In these instances it is the narrator who is pulling the strings.

There are other moments when the narrator is more self effacing and leaves the spoken word to the character. The narration of sentiments continues in a supporting and influencing role. A notable example is when Tristan is on his deathbed, and Tristan's direct address to those around him dominates several pages. The narrator intervenes in the guise of stage director, pointing out to whom Tristan is speaking, and setting the scene:

> Quant mesire Tristrans vit qu'il ne poroit plus durer se petit non, il dist a Dynas "Mandés le roi March!" ... Quant il a dite ceste parole, il conmence a plourer mout fort. Li rois, qui bien voit et conoist qu'il est alés sans retour, ne puet respondre, mais conmence a plourer mout fort... "Oncles, tant seulement faites pour moi par courtoisie de vous, que vous madame Yseut feïssiés venir devant moi, si que je le veïsse a ma fin, c'est la

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[41] Rychner, *La Narration*, p. 158.
[42] Rychner, *La Narration*, pp. 184-185.

> daerraine requeste que je vous face, et qu'ele me voie finer. Car saciés vraiement que je morrai hui u demain..." Quant mesire Tristrans voit venir Yseut, cele k'il ot tant amee et qu'il tan desiroit a veoir, volentiers se drechast contre li, mais il ne pooit. Toute voies fait il com il puet, c'est de parler...[43]

It is in situations such as the above, where the narrator leaves the direct speech to the character, that we perceive multiplicity of voices in the romance. Whether or not there is true polyphony depends on the points of view and ideology of the different voices.

Direct speech of Characters

Dialogues

Dialogues between the characters are an important part of the *Prose Tristan*. They occur in a variety of contexts, at court or on the road. The transition from narrator's (indirect) speech to direct speech is usually signalled by introductory references to their speech. Christine Ferlampin comments on the use of *dire*, *faire*, *respondre* in the transition between indirect and direct discourse:

> Au début du dialogue se trouve une phrase introductive avec un verbe de parole comme *dire,* puis chaque tirade contient le verbe suppléant *faire* en incise... le style indirect suit fréquemment le style direct (§71, 56): ainsi le passage entre le style direct et la narration se fait grâce à des formes intermédiaires, mentionnant la parole mais sous forme de récit. *Dire* est employé surtout à la périphérie du style direct et *faire* dans les incises, à l'intérieur (§80,2; §81,1...): *faire* se trouve dans des énoncés marqués par l'affectivité, alors que *dire* est plus solennel...[44]

As Ferlampin says, dialogues between characters in the *Prose Tristan* are the most common form of expression, and are very codified. The dialogues are underpinned by social rituals, with common values and a common code of conduct for a community which values the 'word':

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[43] TLF IX, pp. 191-193.

[44] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues' in *Nouvelles Recherches*, ed. by Dufournet; pp. 112-113, her references in brackets refer to TLF I.

> Ces dialogues reposent sur une communauté de valeurs garanties par le caractère sacré de la parole.[45]

They take place either on the road in the encounter between knights, where an exchange of words more often than not leads to a joust, or at court, with *dons en blancs*, swearing of oaths etc.[46]

The *Prose Tristan* is a courtly text and the majority of characters' speech is taking place within a homogenous social context. The stylised nature of the characters' speech, in particular the form of address, can help to establish a hierarchy between interlocutors.[47] The one example of dialogue between different social classes occurs when Marc speaks with the shepherds during the episode of Tristan's *folie*. Here the king dispenses with politeness. The shepherds, however, reply to him in courtly language which may seem incongruous with their general character traits:

> Li rois March demande as pastours: "Ki est chis hom ki ci se dort?" Et il respondent: "Sire, ce est uns hom forsenés, ki entre nous repaire. Nous ne savom sans faille dont il vint, mais onques puis k'il vint entre nous, il ne nous laissa se petit non. Et saciés, sire, que, puis que il vint entre nous, a il faite mainte merveille, que, se li rois March le savoit ausi bien con nous le savom, il le tenroit a grant merveille et a trop estrange cose.[48]

Ferlampin suggests that this incongruity leads to a comic effect, which functions along with the device of incognito and the subversive speech of the *fou*, as they do not realise that they are talking to the king.[49]

Therefore, there is a distinction here between the pastoral register, where shepherds use a noble register, and the bucolic, where shepherds use a low register. Here the shepherds are using a noble register, and there is a contrast with Marc's lack of *politesse*. The politeness principle only works one way. The shepherds realise Marc

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[45] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues' pp.109-110.
[46] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues' p. 108.
[47] See Florence Plet, 'L'Usage des appellatifs dans le roman de *Tristan en Prose*', in *Tristan et Iseut: un thème éternel*, ed. by Buschinger and Spiewok , pp. 205-222.
[48] TLF I, p. 270.
[49] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues', p. 111.

is of a higher rank, but he adopts a certain aristocratic *hauteur* and speaks down to the shepherds.

Marc is often on the receiving end of such comic manoeuvres by the narrator, facilitated by the fact that he is travelling incognito when in Logres. In his encounter with Lamorat there is the irony of his overhearing Lamorat's monologue, followed by Lamorat's non-recognition of him. When discovered Marc conceals his true identity. Lamorat recognises his accent to be Cornish, and proceeds to insult him.

> Il me samble, fait Lamorat, a vostre langage que vous parlés, que vous soiiés de Cornuaille. – Si m'ait Diex, fait li rois, si je sui je. Il n'a encore mie granment de tans que je m'en parti. – Pour Dieu, fait Lamorat, quant vous estes de Cornuaille, dites moi nouveles du pieur houme du monde et du plus mauvais, ce est du failli roi de Cornuaille.[50]

There has been another failure of the politeness principle.

These comic manoeuvres are also aggressive at times and the dialogues have been compared to verbal jousting:

> Il ne semble pas y avoir dans ce roman de dialogue sans rivalité. Certes le narrateur mentionne quelquefois des entretiens paisibles, lors des veillées ou pendant les chevauchées oisives.[51] Mais l'auteur ne s'attarde pas:
>
> *assés parlerent cele nuit par laiens de plusieurs coses et d'aventures et puis s'alerent couchier (tome I, § 24,30)*[52]
>
> Se taire, c'est cesser d'agir, souvent dormir.[53]

As Ferlampin points out, words can act as the framework for a joust, organising the challenge and the response. They can also act as a substitute for the joust.[54] The two

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[50] TLF IV, p. 84.
[51] Ferlampin's note: 'Voir la veillée au § 23 et les chevauchées où l'on bavarde (§ 60, 1; § 62, 16; § 81, 20)'.
[52] Ferlampin's italics.
[53] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues', p. 113.
[54] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues', p. 114. It is worth noting also that verbal joust as a prelude to real fighting is a standard feature of epic.

characters who best typify this approach are Dinadan and Kaherdin, constantly questioning the code of conduct and value system that knights errant abide by.

The subversive/rebellious attitudes of Kaherdin and Dinadan are well documented by critics, and were discussed in the previous chapter. What makes their remarks all the more interesting and significant is that they belong to the chivalric elite. It was not uncommon for women to be associated with subversive speech, e.g. Iseut's ambiguous oath in Béroul's *Tristan*, or *la demoiselle hisdeuse* and *la demoiselle mesdisant* in Chrétien's *Perceval*. In the *Prose Tristan*, the *demoiselle mesdisant* is a comic character renowned for her spiteful tongue.

The *demoiselle mesdisant* appears in Tristan as part of the interpolated tale of the *vallet a la cote maltailliee*.[55] It is a curious sequence of events, which, as discussed by Curtis in her article, would seem to bear little relation to the rest of the romance. The adventures involve Lancelot rather than Tristan. The *vallet a la cote maltailliee* will reappear later in the romance as Brun, the brother of Dinadan, but no reference is made back to this first glimpse of him as a young knight at Arthur's court. The *demoisele* arrives at Arthur's court requesting the assistance of a knight to aid her in the accomplishment of a set of difficult adventures. The young Brun volunteers his services, in a bid to establish his name. She is not impressed. Reluctantly she accepts his offer and they embark on their journey together. During this time, the young woman becomes renowned for her unedifying discourse. Branded *mesdisant* by the narrator, she nevertheless, at times, merely questions, among other things, the wisdom of sending a young inexperienced knight to accomplish difficult tasks, as it risks his life needlessly:

> L'aventure si est si grief et si perilleuse que Lanceloz dou Lac avroit assez a faire de mener ceste aventure a fin, qui est li mieudres chevaliers dou monde. Tu faiz pechié et mal, qui si tost l'envoies recevoir mort. Hui l'as

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[55] See Curtis II, pp. 216 ff, Curtis III, p. 88 and TLF I, pp. 63-142, for the adventures of the *demoiselle mesdisant*. There is a slight overlap between the two printed editions, given the use of different base manuscripts. See also Curtis, 'A Romance within a Romance', pp. 17–35.

fait novel chevalier, et hui l'abandones a mort![56]

She is in fact borne out in her cynicism by the fact that they only achieve the adventure in question through the intervention of Lancelot, which can be seen as a subversion of the *Bel Inconnu* story type where the unpromising young knight proves to be the ideal hero in the tale's happy conclusion. She mocks the young *vallet* cruelly along the way. Lancelot's help allows a neat and edifying closure to the sequence, but along the way questions and doubts have been raised. Just before the end of the adventure the *demoisele* disappears from the narrative; her purpose has been served. However, it is very unusual, and more problematic, in chivalric romance, for knights themselves to be responsible for unedifying discourse.[57] Kaherdin and Dinadan's comments, prepared to a certain extent by the *demoisele mesdisant*, will resound around Logres and have a longer lasting effect.

As has been pointed out, there is frequent combination of indirect and direct speech with some examples of free indirect discourse. The narrator's position can be seen to be either neutral, with a straightforward introduction by way of a verb of speech, or more weighted, appropriating the character's style and sentiment while grammatically still using the narratorial voice, as in the example of Palamedés given earlier.

In the instances of Dinadan and Kaherdin, the less orthodox knights, their utterances are firmly in the first person. The narratorial voice interferes less, although the contextualisation of their comments within the narrative could be seen to be significant. We saw in the last chapter how, during Kaherdin's final adventures in the kingdom of Logres, disillusionment has set in as he parts company with Palamedés, a knight who does not question his chivalric duty:

> Je reni ci endroit les aventures du roiaume de Logres. Gardés les bien, je les vous lais, car je voi bien tout apertement que li graindres esfors, li graindres preus et li graindres los si est de ferir et d'abatre et d'ocire et de

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[56] Curtis II, p. 224.
[57] Ferlampin, 'Les Dialogues', p. 114.

mehaignier li uns l'autre, ki ne me samble pas santé![58]

Once he has parted company with Palamedés, Kaherdin encounters the seneschal Kay, who, in accordance with the chivalric customs of Logres, challenges him to a joust. What ensues is not a meeting of minds:

> Sire cevaliers, gardés vos de moi! A jouster vous couvient! – Onques mais, fait Kahedins, se Diex me consaut, n'oï parler de teus salus... On aloit disant par le monde que u roiaume de Logres avoit greigneur pais que en nul autre païs, et je n'i vois se guerre non... Sire, fait Kahedins, or sachiés tout chertainnement que onques vostre peres ne mesfist au mien, que je sace, ne vous a moi. Pour coi je vous quit boinement de toutes quereles... Quant mesire Kex entent ceste nouvele, il quide tout certainnement que chil cevaliers le voist ensi gabant...[59]

It is interesting to note that the narrator uses indirect speech only when referring to Kay's reaction to Kaherdin, which would have been the more orthodox stance. All of Kaherdin's remarks are in the character's own voice. This could be construed as a the narrator distancing himself from Kaherdin's thoughts, or not wanting to take responsibility for them. Having said that, the voice of the character brings his thoughts directly and dramatically to the audience. Kay's voice is attenuated and distanced from the audience by being filtered through the narrator, who then proceeds to signal Kay's interpretative error by the use of *quide* with the subjunctive. Therefore, the narrator can be seen to be successful in being distanced from the controversial standpoint but still managing to air the debate surrounding the encounter between Kaherdin and Kay. Kay's error of judgement is confirmed by his following words which are quoted directly by the narrator:

> Dans cevaliers, vous m'alés gabant durement, mais saciés tout certainnement que je pris mout petit vos gas.[60]

Finally this episode is only resolved with Kaherdin reluctantly forced into obeying yet another evil custom, by fighting with an unknown enemy. This enemy turns out to be

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[58] TLF I, p. 190. See also above p. 153.
[59] TLF I, p. 191.
[60] TLF I, p. 192.

his own father.[61]

> Kahédins, biaux fiex, que ferom nous? Je sui li rois Hoël, tes peres, ki estoie venus en la Grant Bretaingne pour toi trouver. Or t'ai trouvé, non pas en tel maniere com peres doit trouver fil, ains t'ai trouvé en cestui point comme le plus mortel anemi que je onques mais trouvaisse, car petit s'en faut que tu ne m'as mort![62]

The exchange is situated at an interesting juncture in the romance, in a context which conspires to lend weight to Kaherdin's grievances. The 'fate' which undermines the traditional values is, in fact, an effect of the authorial manipulation of material, which actually leaves the narrator hierarchically on the same level as the characters. Even the choice of Kay to represent and defend the values of Logres could also be seen to be significant in so far as Arthur's seneschal is sometimes portrayed as a blundering fool, impetuous and lacking wisdom. This is certainly Chrétien de Troyes' view, although not necessarily typical of all romances. More significant though is the fact that interpolated into this episode is the account of the founding of the castle, *La Vergoigne Uter*, which relates the story of the adulterous liaison which led to the conception of King Arthur. This historical account raises questions about the moral standing of Arthur's kingdom.[63] Again, this is authorial manipulation, and brings up the important feature of inter-textual dialogue. As mentioned in the previous chapter the undermining and questioning of Logres chivalry recurs throughout the romance. This is a case in point, and, as such, it influences the interpretation of the material around it.

The narrative situation, with the terrible prospect of father and son fighting anonymously for the sake of a custom, justifies Kaherdin's comments. Furthermore, the potential victims are not knights errant of Logres, but from Brittany. This adds to the horror of the situation. Kay's final intervention does save the day, as he helps

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[61] Tragic father-son fights are not uncommon in romance. Chrétien already questions the custom of anonymous conflict in the Gauvain-Yvain duel in *Yvain*, and tragedy is only just avoided by Marie de France in *Milon*, when father and son realise their true identities before harm is done.
[62] TLF I, p. 219.
[63] TLF I, pp. 201-210.

Kaherdin and his father to defeat the four knights whose evil custom they were being obliged to follow. This is another apparent and surprising orthodoxy. The neat closure of this particular episode undermines some of the arguments for dialogism, but is only achieved following much questioning and doubt along the way. If grammatically, by giving him direct speech for most of the time, the narrator has feigned distance from Kaherdin, the context in which the episode is placed would suggest otherwise. This narrator is at odds with the neat closure decreed by the authorial *li contes*.

The dialogues between knights, on the open road and in more enclosed areas, at times can represent the sole action of episodes. The episode of Tristan, Palamedés and Dinadan in the prison of Daras, following the tournament at *Château des Pucelles,* is a prime example.[64] The text focuses on the three-way conversation between the knights, with Dinadan playing a key orchestrating role. At the outset he is the only character to be aware of the identity of everybody. Gently and humorously he defuses a potentially volatile situation with his words:

> Palamidés, fait il, Se Diex vous saut, veïstes vous onques en un lieu metre ensamble deus bestes qui naturaulement s'entrehaïssent, ki longement se tenissent em pais?
> ...
> Palamidés, ce dist Dynadans, or oi je bien tout clerement par vos paroles k'il avra des ore mais boine pais entre vous et monsigneur Tristran. Bien serés ore loial ami. Ja Dieu ne plache que la vostre amour puisse mais tant durer com fist l'amour de Galehaut et de Lanselot du Lac, et non fera ele sans doute, che sai je tout vraiement!" Mesire Tristrans se rist des paroles de Dynadant...[65]

This is only one of many examples where words in the *Prose Tristan* take precedence over action. The word is of prime interest and importance in the *Prose Tristan*, and bland as the narrator's speech might appear to some, the manipulation of the characters' speech is far from dull. The representation of language and the word is highly self-conscious and sophisticated. Vance's comments referring to *Aucassin et*

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[64] TLF III, pp. 188-194.
[65] TLF III, pp. 189-191.

Nicolette could be equally well applied to the *Prose Tristan*:

> The representation of action by speech tends to become subordinate to the representation of speech itself as action.[66]

This is particularly true of the generic insertions, which will be looked at next.

Surprisingly, the dialogues between Tristan and Iseut, by contrast, seem to lack life and humour, as Florence Plet points out:

> Entre Tristan et Yseut, réunis à la Joyeuse Garde au tome V, pas d'originalité: leurs échanges restent extrêmement conventionnels: sire/ (ma) dame (par. 49-50). Il est vrai qu'ils doivent rester discrets sur leur identité, mais pas un terme tendre n'apparaît, même lorsqu'ils sont seuls. Le *Lancelot*, lui, disposait de plus tendres appellatifs de la part de Guenièvre: Bials amis, Biau doux amis, Biau sire, ou même Lanceloz, lui disait-elle tête à tête.
>
> Les amants n'appellent jamais *amie* leur bien-aimée, ils n'utilisent pas leur nom: le seul terme qui leur soit adressé est (ma) dame: que ce soit Dynas, Hunesson ou Tristan, pas d'exception.[67]

However, this discretion in speech would suggest that the *Prose Tristan* is closer to the rhetoric of the *trouvère* lyric than the *Prose Lancelot*, and even announces the formalism of Machaut and Froissart in the fourteenth century.

The subject of love would not appear to be greatly developed in these rather formal dialogues. It is treated elsewhere in the many monologues throughout the text, monologues both in prose and verse.

Generic Insertions and Monologues

We shall begin by considering generic insertions, before considering prose monologues. There are three different genres inserted into the *Prose Tristan*, riddles,

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[66] Eugene Vance, *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 155.
[67] Florence Plet, 'L'usage des appellatifs', p. 219.

letters (prose and verse) and *lais*. We will deal with the riddles and letters before concentrating on the main generic insertion, the *lai*.

These generic insertions provide even more of a contrast to the prose of the narrator, than do characters' direct speech. Unlike the dialogues and prose monologues they stand out visually on the manuscript page, and this also would have had implications for performance and transmission.[68]

Baumgartner gives a comprehensive list of verse generic insertions in her *Essai*, which is based on the manuscript Paris BN f. fr. 335-6, but is also representative of Vienna 2542.[69] However, she does not include the few prose insertions, all of which are letters. The following list gives references for these letters in the three volumes by Curtis and the TLF volumes, as well as the other insertions in verse:

Prose Letters

Acarive's forged letter, supposedly from Gloriande to her lover: Curtis I, p. 117.
Princess Belide's love letter to the young Tristan: Curtis I, p. 145.
Iseut's letter to Guinevere: Curtis II, p. 165.
Guinevere's reply to Iseut: Curtis II, p. 172.
Tristan's letter to Lancelot: Curtis III, p. 12.
Lancelot's reply to Tristan: Curtis III, p. 16.
Iseut's letter to Tristan: Curtis III, pp. 89-90.
Arthur's letter to Marc: TLF IV, p. 265.
Marc's reply to Arthur: TLF IV, p. 270.
Tristan to Iseut: TLF VII, pp. 127-129.

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[68] *Les Lais du Roman de Tristan en Prose* ed. by Fotitch and Steiner, and Jean Maillard, 'Coutumes musicales au moyen âge d'après le *Tristan en Prose*' in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 2 (1959), 341-353; idem, 'Lais avec notation dans le *Tristan en Prose*', in *Mélanges Rita Lejeune*, pp. 1347-1364; idem, 'Folie n'est pas vasselage...', in *Mélanges de littérature du moyen age au xx^e siècle offerts à Melle Jeanne Lods par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*, , 2 vols (Paris: E.N.S.J.F., 1978), I, 414-432.
[69] Baumgartner, *Essai*, p. 298.

Verse letters:

Tristan to Arthur: TLF IV, p. 252.

Tristan to Lancelot: TLF IV, p. 255.

Lancelot to Tristan: TLF IV, p. 258.

Arthur to Tristan: TLF IV, p. 261.

Marc to Guinevere: TLF IV, p. 272.

Letter from Iseut to Tristan: TLF VII, p. 85.

Riddles:

Giant: Curtis I, pp. 76, 79, 80 and 90.

Pelias: Curtis I, p. 82.

Apollo: Curtis I, p. 91.

Lais

Lai Mortel by Tristan: Curtis III, p. 170.

Lai Mortel by Iseut: Curtis III, p. 225.

First *Lai* by Kaherdin: TLF I, p. 230.

Lai by Iseut to Kaherdin: TLF I, p. 233.

Second *Lai* by Kaherdin: TLF I, p. 238.

Lai by Lamorat: TLF IV, p. 77.

Lai Voir Disant by Dinadan: TLF VI, p.344.

Lai by Palamedés: TLF VI, pp. 99-100.

Lai de la Pentecôte: TLF VI, p. 250.

Lai by Helys: TLF, VI, p. 311.

Nine lines by Tristan: TLF, VI, p. 368.

Lai de Victoire: TLF VII, pp. 298-299.

*Lai du Boire Plaisan*t: TLF VII, p. 301.

Lai de Tristan: TLF IX, pp. 170-171.

The first lyric insertions to appear in the continuous prose are a series of riddles.[70] Appearing very early, in the part of the romance which relates Tristan's ancestry, they do not play an integral part in the main body of the romance. They occur in the context of the evil custom of a wicked giant who holds unfortunate travellers captive in his enchanted forest. Used as a device to trap people, they also are a means of escape. Apollo and Pelias are able to exploit this and to cause the giant's downfall as a result, thereby abolishing the evil custom. All the riddles are made up of rhyming octosyllabic couplets. Thematically the giant's verses all relate to himself and serve to point out his monstrous features of child abuse, matricide, infanticide and even cannibalism, e.g.

> Un arbre, fai il, oi jadis,
> Que j'amai plus que paradis.
> Tant le gardai que fruit porta;
> La biauté del fruit m'enorta
> A ce que je la flor en pris.
> Après le fruit tant en mespris
> Que le fruit manjai sanz refu.
> Vassal, devine que ce fu!
> Sel devine, tu iés gariz;
> Se non, saiches tu iés peris.[71]

Sador interprets the riddle correctly. It is worth noting the use of classical sources, such as Oedipus and the Sphinx.

> L'arbre que tu eüs jadis fu une feme que tu amoies de si grant amor que tu n'amoies Dieu ne home autant com tu fesoies lui... Tu demoras tant avec li, et tant la gardas, qu'ele ot une fille de toi, tant bele et tant avenant, que quant ele vint en aage d'avoir compaignie d'ome, la biauté de li t'esmut et t'amonesta a ce que tu geüsses a li charnelment... un jor... tu coreüs sus a ta fille et la manjas; et ce fu le fruit de ton arbre.[72]

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[70] Although the Vienna 2542 manuscript abridges the early part of the romance, and remains unedited, these riddles do appear in the Paris BN f. fr. 335 manuscript, as well as the Carpentras manuscript. Paris BN f. fr. 335-336 is probably the best example of the vulgate version of the romance, as discussed in Chapter One.

[71] Curtis I, p. 76.

[72] Curtis I, p. 77.

Janina Traxler believes that all the riddles are relevant to the themes of the romance and prepare the audience for what is to follow. [73] She sees the first two riddles as preparing the reader for the incest of Apollo and Chélinde. The third riddle echoes the fratricide of the opening of the romance when Sador murdered his brother, and announces the fratricide of Marc committed against his brother, Pernehan. Indeed, as a whole, she sees them as announcing the destruction of the Arthurian worlds from within. Even the riddles posed by Pélias and Apollo relate to adultery and betrayal, the trials and tribulations that will befall their families. The flaws in the ancestors of Tristan and Iseut are revealed, the same flaws which will undermine the lovers' life, and eventually bring down Arthur's kingdom from within. The captivity with the giant could also be seen to prefigure Tristan and Iseut's later captivity on the *Isle des Pleurs*, which is part of Galehot's domain[74]. They will, of course eventually escape from Galehot's island, and the riddles interlude, as well as announcing the moral decline of the lineage, also prefigures the resourcefulness present in the ancestral heroes of Tristan and Iseut.

The riddles provide an interesting variation of tone, part of a literary game, which perhaps can be seen to encourage this metaphoric disguise. The shift in register to gnomic discourse is in itself important, as it breaks the surface of the narrative. There is also a dialogue with the Oedipus story and the Ogre of Mont-St-Michel in Wace's *Brut*.

Letters

The next category of insertions is epistolary.

These inserted letters in the *Prose Tristan* would seem to be quite close to what we

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[73] See Janina Traxler, 'Observations on the Importance', 539-549.

[74] See Harf-Lancner, 'Le géant et la fée: l'utilisation d'un schéma folklorique dans le *Tristan en Prose*, in *Actes du 14e Congrès International Arthurien*, ed. by Charles Foulon and others (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1985), pp. 302-313. See also Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire*, pp. 510-513, for a discussion of the riddles which does not link them to other themes in the romance.

know of non-fictional letters of the time, and the characters are shown writing and reading them in private. This is a definite change from the practice of letters being dictated and read aloud which is found in Béroul's *Tristan*, which reflects an increase in literacy of the aristocracy at that time.[75]

Giles Constable claims that definitions of the epistolary genre are problematic:

> This breadth of scope makes it hard to find a strict definition for the epistolary genre. Letters were written in the Middle Ages in many different forms and styles, on many different subjects, and of very different length. Some letters are indistinguishable from official documents, and others from poems.[76]

However, according to Michael Clanchy, by the thirteenth century it would not have been unusual for personal letters to have been exchanged, along with the more public and formal uses of the genre:

> In the late twelfth century letters, in the modern sense of missives sent by one individual to convey confidential information to another, came into more general use. Previously, letters had usually been either writs patent, which were open declarations or title deeds, or 'literature' composed by rhetoricians or preachers.[77]

Increased literacy widened the scope for intimacy in correspondence. As a result, the letters, inserted into the narrative, are a rare and privileged opportunity for the expression of the inner thoughts of characters. This is particularly rare for the female characters in the text, who are not given as much coverage, and hence receive fewer opportunities for direct speech than male protagonists. As Curtis points out in her study, the letters are highly self-conscious compositions, as the writers know that the recipient will read them and examine them over and over again: 'The letters are for the most part elaborately composed and highly rhetorical in style.'[78] One description

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[75] See Curtis, *Tristan Studies*, p. 56.
[76] Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, fasc. 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), p. 12.
[77] M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (London: Arnold, 1979).
[78] Curtis, *Tristan Studies*, p. 56.

of letters of the period by Murphy emphasises the influence of rhetoric, or *dictamen*, which recommended a particular division into parts for the letter, as well as careful and elegant choice of words:

> An epistle or letter, then, is a suitable arrangement of words set forth to express the intended meaning of its sender... There are in fact, five parts of a letter: the Salutation, the Securing of Good-will, the Narration, the Petition, and the Conclusion.[79]

This definition also raises the dialogic aspect of letters as a genre, dating from the use of the genre in antiquity, that is, the aspect of an anticipated recipient and potential response to the missive:

> The letter was thus regarded as half of a conversation or dialogue between the sender and the addressee, and it involved a quasi-presence and quasi-speech between the two.[80]

Iseut's first letter to Guinevere would seem to correspond to these points. It obeys the accepted rhetorical principles of careful construction, with a salutation, securing of good-will, narration and petition. However, the conclusion seems a little abrupt in comparison with the rest. It is also clear from her letter that she is hoping for a reply from her addressee:

> **Salutation**: A vos, ma dame la roïne Genevre, qui de bonté, de beauté, de valor, de sens, de cortoisie et de hautesce avez passee totes les mortiex dames dou monde, et qui bien estes la plus beneüree dame qui vive orandroit, je, Yselt, roïne de Cornoaille, la plus chetive qui vive, salut.
> **Securing of good will**: Ma dame, por ce que en tot le monde je ne sai ne ne voi autretant de sens en dame com il a en vos qui bien estes fontene de totes les dames dou monde...
> **Narration**: Et me pleg a vos des deux plus mortiex anemis que je mentenant aie au monde: premierement de Tristan...Et après me pleg d'amors ou je avoie tot mis...
> **Petition**: Et por ce que je ne sai nule dame... qui pooir ait ne science de moi conseillier se vos non, vos pri je por Dieu que vostre grant hautesce se deint a ce humilier que vos por Dieu deigniez recevoir en memoire

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[79] James J. Murphy, ed., *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 7.
[80] Constable, *Letters*, p. 13.

aucun po de ma dolor en tel maniere que je puisse aucun confort avoir par la grace de la science qui en vos est.

These are the final words of the letter, which has no formal **Conclusion,** or summing up, as will be seen in Guinevere's reply.[81]

Although a clear conclusion would seem to be lacking, the information required is included in the petition. Guinevere does indeed reply to her counterpart in Cornwall. Her reply is equally courteous and rhetorically competent:

> **Salutation:** A vos, madame Yselt, roïne de Cornoaille, si bone dame et si bele et si gracieuse de totes choses... je, Genevre, roïne del reaume de Logres ... vos salu come ma dame...
> **Securing of good will:** ...tote ma vie me sovenra mes de la doce complente que vos me mandastes en vos letres. De ce me sovient il et sovenra tote ma vie. Et quant je me recort de la grant franchise de vostre cors, je ne voi pas coment je aie tant de sens et de savoir que je vos saiche respondre si soutilment ne si bel com il seroit mestiers a si haute dame et a si saige come je vos ai trovee.
> **Narration:** D'amors, ce m'est avis, est meüe vostre complente, et dites que vielenement et felenessement vos a amor traïe del servise que vos li avez fait... Et quant je l'é bien entendue, je vos respont si come je sai... amors, ce me semble, est tot autresi come li sires muable qui tient une grant piece son sergent en grant beneürté, et aprés quant il se porpense... il le trebuche de si haut si bas.
> **Petition:** Et por ce, dame, vos devez vos reconforter et prendre cuer, et penser en vos meïsmes que aprés ceste dolor vos vendra joie.
> **Conclusion:** ... ce est ma response, ce est mon dit, et ce vos doit durement reconforter, et moi metre auques en dotance.[82]

As Guinevere is commenting on the changing nature of love, her final comments are ironic, as she ponders the possibility that her own happiness may not last. The audience would have been familiar with the outcome of the love between her and Lancelot in the *Mort Artu*.

Given that Guinevere is replying to Iseut's 'petition' for advice, the corresponding

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[81] Curtis II, p. 165 for text; the letters have been divided into sections for the purpose of this discussion. This is also the case for subsequent quotations of letters.
[82] Curtis II, pp. 172-173.

section provides a 'response' to her correspondent's request. It could be said therefore, that Murphy's model, quoted above, allows for only one side of the dialogue, or for letters of petition to superiors. Otherwise, Guinevere's reply is very similar in its use of rhetoric and politeness formulae to Iseut's letter.

The letter from Tristan to Lancelot is in a similar vein, but longer than Iseut's to Guinevere. It is also very rhetorical and is of a similar construction:

> **Salutation:** A vos, mesire Lancelot dou Lac, fiuz le foi Ban de Benoïc, qui de bonté et de valor et de sens et de cortoisie, de hardement et de proesce, de force, de chevalerie, de franchise et de gentillesce, et de totes bones graces que chevaliers doit avoir, avez tot le monde passé...Tristranz,...vos salu de si bon cuer come chevaliers puet saluer autre, et vos envoie ma complainte ou je comance en tel maniere.
> **Securing of Good Will:** Et por ce que je sai et conois bien que tot autretel maladie com est cele d'ou je voi languissant avez vos si bien esprovee que vos la conoissiez bien ... me vois je aprochant de vos et treant pres, car il m'est bien avis sanz faille que vos me savrez conseilier et conforter...
> **Narration:** Amors m'ocist, amors me tue, amors me fait vif enragier, amor me tost san et raison; amor me fait et megre et pale, et gesir quant je doi lever, plorer quant tuit li autre rïent...
> **Petition**: Lanceloz, tant come je puis prier mon chier ami, que vos me doignoiz conseil que je porrai faire por finer ceste grant dolor qui si fort me vet tormentant come je vos cont...
> **Conclusion:** Or me remandrez, si vous plest, par vostre brief la quele de ces deus voies je tenrai, car sanz l'une ne puis je vivre.[83]

Lancelot's reply is also very long. It is more difficult to pin it down to the neat construction of the other letters because of its length, and the amount of repetition, but the main sections are included.

> **Salutation:** Mesire Tristanz, biaus amis, je, Lanceloz, fius dou roi Ban de Benoïc...
> **Securing of Good Will:** qui sui vostres chevaliers en totes les manieres que je le porroie estre a vostre honor et a la moie, vos merci mout...
> **Narration:** D'amors ai je tant esprové que je voi tot apertement

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[83] Curtis III, pp. 12-14.

> qu'amors et fortuen sont dui frere charnel, d'un pooir, d'une force et d'une ahatie, et sont assis en un siege li uns lez l'autre el mireor et el regart dou monde. Et vont le monde remirant, et departant les mortiex choses a lor volentez et a lor establissemenz, non pas par igual maniere...
> **Petition:** Mesire Tristanz, or sachiez que totes ces paroles que je vos ai ci mis avant sont bien por vos reconforter...
> **Conclusion:** Ce est mon consel et ma response. Nul consel n'i voi qui si vos puist rasoaigier vostre dolor.[84]

Indeed, both the letters penned by the men are significantly longer than those penned by the two women. They both go into far more detail about the effects of love and make more use of the rhetoric of love. Lancelot's reply indeed, draws heavily on the allegory of serf and lord / heart and body:

> Or donc Tristanz, biax douz amis, puis que je vos ai ici prové par bele reson, ce me semble, que li cuers est sires dou cors, vos di je que vos devez aler par reson en Cornauille et mener le serf au seignor, non mie faire venir le seignor au serf; et ce est ma raison parfaite.[85]

Earlier in the letter he also corrected Tristan in his opinion that he himself was always blessed in love, and emphasises love's variable and changing nature, playing on words in a very poetic style:

> Amors est si etrange chose et si puissanz, et si est si merveilleuse que les uns fait adés plorer et les autres adés joer. Il est d'amors la maniere que li uns en plore et li autres en rit, l'un fait pensif et l'autre lié... Or est mere, or est marratre; or est, or aime; or est amie, or est anemie...[86]

There is no justification within the narrative structure for the male characters to receive more detailed coverage in these parallel exchanges. It is just symptomatic of the greater interest in the male characters in the genre of romance, and perhaps also reflects the relative powerlessness of the female characters to control their situation.

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[84] Curtis III, pp. 16-21.

[85] Curtis III, p. 21.
[86] Curtis III, p. 18.

As already mentioned, the exchange of letters is the only direct communication between Iseut and Guinevere in the course of the whole romance.

Many of the conditions of *fin 'amor* seem to be observed in these letters, such as the way in which love is discussed and feelings expressed. They are not love letters, addressed to the beloved, but rather exchanges with a peer who finds him or herself in a similar situation. In this instance the situation is that of an adulterous liaison, as well as insecurity in the relationship itself. This exchange serves to bring the two couples closer together, before they have even met, preparing the audience for future contact and exchange. If we accept adultery as being normal in *fin 'amor* then the letters are not subversive in that particular context, whatever the issues in other areas of the romance. They act as a kind of debate, and in both cases the reply deals specifically with the issues raised by the one who opened the correspondence. They seem to be adaptations of *tenso* and *partimen*, debate and satire poems in the troubadour tradition, which were dialogued forms where poets exchanged views on a particular subject. It was a platform for *troubadours* and *trouvères* to theorise about their art and show off their virtuosity.[87]

The universe of lyric is predominantly masculine; therefore it would be unusual to hear the voice of the lady. In the *Prose Tristan*, male bonding and rivalry is developed far more fully than any female bonding. Tristan and Lancelot will meet on several occasions, whereas Iseut and Guinevere are scrupulously kept apart by the narrator. This exchange of letters provides the only example of female bonding in the romance between two ladies of equal rank.

The next sequence of epistolary insertions does not occur until much later in the romance, when Tristan has returned to Cornwall, reconciled with Marc, following their sojourn at Arthur's court. As with the first letters in prose there are very courtly exchanges between Tristan, Lancelot and Arthur, this time in verse. Things begin to

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[87] See Baumgartner, *Histoire de la littérature*, p. 93.

change when, concerned for Tristan's welfare, Arthur chooses to write to Marc in prose. Standing out from the other verse letters in style it also differs in tone and content. Arthur's address to Marc is an affront to his dignity as king and also contains a threat should Marc mistreat Tristan. The principle sections of the rhetorical type are subverted to insult:

> **Salutation:** A vous rois March, ki tant estes boins, eüreus et bien ceans... car sans grant travail et sans vostre espee traire avés ja veü delivrer vostre roiaume pluiseurs poins fors et doutables et par une seule main, che fu par la main du boin Tristran...
> **Narration:** je di bien tout apertement k'il n'a orendroit en chest monde un chevalier que on doie autant hounerer que on fait lui.
> **Petition:** Pour coi je vous pri et requier, tant com je porroie proiier a nul home, que vous hounour li portés se vous amés vostre hounour roial a tenir.
> **Conclusion:** Et se vous autrement le faites, sachiés bien tout chertainnement que tart em porrés venir au repentir.[88]

This would appear to invert or even subvert the model quoted earlier, of an inferior writing to a superior in search of support. This letter immediately changes the tone which had been set in the exchanges between Tristan, Lancelot and Arthur. It is hardly surprising that Marc should decide to fight fire with fire. At this stage in affairs, Tristan is safe in Cornwall. Marc has not yet harmed him, albeit he suspects him of continuing the affair with Iseut. In his reply, he advises Arthur to mind his own business regarding Tristan and to pay more attention to what is going on in his own court. Although the letter is addressed directly to Arthur, Marc uses the example of a third party, a king close to Arthur, to make his point

> **Salutation:** A vous, rois de la Grant Bretaingne
> **Securing of Good Will:** ki mainte grant honte avés faite a maint haut home et a maint gentil...
> **Narration:** Je ne resamble pas tel roi a en chest monde, car il a ex et gaires n'en voit... Et saciés tout chertainnement, rois Artus, que chil est si pres vostre voisins, ki ne voit riens ne goute n'ot, que auques est de vostre conseil. Je le sai mieus que il ne set.
> **Petition:** Pour coi je vous pri mout durement que vous li diés que il laist

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[88] TLF IV, p. 265.

le roi March em pais, oeuvre les iex, si regart sa honte ki li pent a l'oeil,
l'autrui honte laist ester, et de la soie aille pensant, et vous meïsmes prie
mout durement que vous ne vous entremetés de mon fait et de Tristran,
Conclusion: car je m'en sarai mout bien chevir.[89]

This thinly veiled reference to his being cuckolded goes unperceived by Arthur. However, it does not fail to worry Guinevere and Lancelot, especially when the queen also receives a personal letter from Marc. The letter is in fact disguised as a *lai*. Marc may well have done this to frighten Guinevere into thinking that the contents would have been make public in a performance.[90] In fact, it is a hoax. It is an interesting hybridisation of the letter and *lai*, which could be interchangeable as we shall see later, with the *lai* being a message. This particular mixing of styles and content is thoroughly subversive, although in the process Marc can be seen to be raising obvious questions as to the integrity of the values personified by Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere; questions which would have been noted by a sophisticated audience. His *lai* begins by subverting the standard formula, and his compliment of the honour she gives to her husband is ironic. Comments which follow on from that are directed at the undermining of Arthur's masculinity and also his authority. The insults also implicate Lancelot, who is betraying his king:

Salu vous com je le doi faire,
Roïne de mauvais afaire
...
Du grant bien, de la grant hounour
Que faites a vostre signour
Sui je mout liés et mout joians.
Il a ex, mais n'est pas veans,
Si a oreilles, mais il n'ot
...
Bien li savés la barbe tondre
Sans aigue, plumer et retondre.
Bien le tenés com beste fole,
L'uns le blandist, l'autres l'afole.[91]

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[89] TLF IV, pp. 270-271.
[90] The *lai* does have a public nature, being set to music, 'canter apertement'; see below note 93, p. 230.
[91] TLF IV, p. 272-273.

The audience's reactions cannot but be mixed. If we agree with most commentators that Marc is portrayed as the villain, it could be seen as a device to increase our rage at his behaviour. And yet, notwithstanding Marc's lack of diplomacy and tact, all that he says is true. It is also interesting to note that in both this *lai* and in his letter to Arthur, Marc uses biblical allusions, from Isaiah 6: 9,10: 'You will be ever hearing, but never understanding, you will be ever seeing but never perceiving'; and Matthew 7: 3: 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own?' Marc would seem to be the only character here quoting scripture, and this has uncomfortable implications if the audience still perceive him as the villain of the piece.[92] The narrator's introduction to Marc's letter does not pass comment:

> ...ele prent les letres que li rois March li avoit envoiies et les conmenche a lire de cief en chief.

Criticisms and outrage, expressed in indirect speech, belong to the character of Guinevere:

> Et quant ele les a bien leües, ele conoist que felenessnes estoient les letres et vilainnes outre mesure, et parloient tout apertement sour li et sour monsigneur Lanselot que il n'i aloit riens chelant. Et sachiés que les letres estoient faites en samblanche de lai, et li avoit li rois March envoiié le cant et le dit pour ce qu'ele s'en tenist plus a morte et a honnie, et qu'ele quidast k'il le feïst canter apertement, et disoient les letres en tel maniere...[93]

Surely we must be left to reflect that were the queen and Lancelot beyond reproach, there would be no cause for concern on their behalf. The consternation perhaps prefigures or announces the anxiety surrounding adultery which leads to the chain of events in the *Mort Artu*, with its negative perception of adultery. Even within the *Prose Tristan* this is the first time the couple of Lancelot and Guinevere comes in for any criticism, albeit from Marc. The earlier prose letters do not equate their adultery

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[92] In his satirical *lai voir disant*, Dinadan compares Mark to Absalom, the son of David, guilty of fratricide, like Marc (2 Samuel, 13).
[93] TLF IV, p. 272.

with any controversy and appear perfectly courtly. The verse letters between Tristan, Lancelot and Arthur sustain this use of correspondence. The change in tone is initiated by Arthur. He returns to prose, but inverts the courtesy of the earlier prose letters. Marc adopts a *lai* form, which is in fact a letter masquerading as a *lai*. The mixing, matching and overlapping of style and content are very dialogic. The uses of convention are loaded with certain expectations and the audience would not have failed to recognise the play on form and content. The complexity of expression reflects the complexity of the situation and raises more questions than it answers.

Therefore, the opposition between Marc and Arthur in this exchange is far from straightforward. There are many similarities between the two kings, perhaps more similarities than differences. Both are cuckolds, but Marc is painfully aware of his situation, unlike Arthur who is blissfully ignorant of his. There is no dichotomy of good and evil, wisdom and foolishness, but rather a merging of characteristics, and blurring of boundaries with regards the behaviour of the two kings.

However one might excuse Marc for retaliating in the way he does, the narrator does ensure that the conclusion of this particular series of events sees him on the receiving end. Fittingly, it is Dinadan who has the last word with the composition and performance of the *lai voir disant* which publicly humiliates Marc.

It is based on Tristan's *lai mortel*, but is very insulting in tone.[94] It can also be compared to the *lai* which Marc sent to Guinevere. Indeed, Dinadan is retaliating specifically against that missive from Marc. He takes up points made by Marc about Arthur and redirects them at the Cornish king, reworking insults such as *dolans, chaitif, forsené*. Whereas Marc comments, ironically, on how well concealed Guinevere's faults are:

> Vostre ouevre a trop esté celee,
> Mais je le vous voel descrouvrir

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[94] See introduction to TLF, IV, p. 46.

Et le mien pensé aouvrir.[95]

Dinadan is far more direct:

Rois March, tes oeuvres ne chelom.
Ainc si mal roi ne si felon.[96]

Strictly speaking this *lai* is not epistolary, but it resolves the series of epistolary exchanges, re-establishing the status quo, which casts Marc as villain, getting the bad treatment he deserves. It again involves a mixing of styles and tone. Marc is tricked into allowing the *lai* to be read out in public, told nothing of its content, only that it tells the truth. The *lai* is parodic, in that it is echoing the earlier trade of insults, and also subverting literary style and content. The insults contained within it are too direct to be considered ironic. Marc is named from the start, and the *lai* is a catalogue of explicit insults:

Du mauvais roi, du non sachant
Ki tout mal vait a soi sachant,
Conmens mon lay et fas mon chant.
Bien li doit Dieus estre trenchant.

Du plus mauvais ki soit en vie
M'est venus talens et envie
Que je cont sa mauvaise vie.
Raison a chestui fait m'envie.

Rois March, dolans, viex et chaitif,
Ki a tout bien faire es restrif,
tu es conmen li gous mestif
Ke vers le lyon prent estrif.
...
De ta vergoingne et de ta honte
Ki toutes deshounours sourmonte,
Fine mon lay, que roi et conte
Metront encore en haut aconte.
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[95] TLF IV, pp. 272-273.
[96] TLF IV, pp. 344-355.

If the dubious exchange of letters between Cornwall and Logres temporarily raises questions about the moral standing of the two kingdoms, this *lai* does serve to restore the upper hand to Logres, but ironically through the voice of one of the most persistent critics of the standards and customs of that kingdom. As was seen with earlier episodes involving Kaherdin and Kay, the romance's material dictates a return to the status quo, but, along the way, the narrator makes sure that plenty of questions have been raised. This exchange provokes an advance in the plot. The narrative soon twists again, as this episode leads to the imprisonment of Tristan by Marc. Prior to being tormented in this way by Arthur, and subsequently by Dinadan, Marc had not harmed Tristan. Dinadan's role in this episode is significant: given that he has already been shown to be fiercely critical of the ideals of Logres, his criticism of Cornwall should not be read automatically as a defence of Arthur's realm.

The riddles, prose letters, verse letters and *lais*, are privileged moments of expression for the characters, relatively free of narratorial interference. In this respect they contribute to the multiplicity of voices and discourse in the romance. The characters subvert discourse in their own right. The narrator does not interfere in their actual enunciation. The narrator's main function is the framing of the insertions. The context of the insertions, in particular, with reference to the exchanges just discussed, would seem to restore an orthodox gloss on events: Arthur and Logres represent good and Marc and Cornwall represent evil. On closer examination, the questions raised by the characters' voices, and their use of language, on both sides, challenge this neat opposition and authorial manipulation.

Lais

The most frequent and influential type of insertion in the *Prose Tristan* is that of the Arthurian *lai*, dealing with the theme of love. Their content plays with many themes of *fin' amor*, but resembles earlier Old French narratives, such as the lives of saints with their monorhyming quatrains. They therefore could be described as a hybrid genre in essence. Called *lai*, they are not to be confused with the narrative *lais* of Marie de France, or the later *lais* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The

'Arthurian' *lai* functions as an inserted genre in prose romances from the thirteenth century onwards.[97] It perhaps has Celtic origins but evidence is too scarce to positively identify a source. These Arthurian *lais* in monorhyming quatrains can treat the themes of joy, pain, love, invocation, funeral laments etc. In the *Prose Tristan* their form appears archaic in contrast to the comparative modernity of the prose.

Love in this context is love as defined by *fin'amor* and expressed in the *chant courtois* which was made popular in France by the *troubadours* in the South and was later inherited by the *trouvères* in the North.[98] The main distinctive features of the tradition can be described as follows:

1. The lady may be married; often we do not know. The singer is usually male. This is true as far as we know in the North but a couple of dozen female singers are known from the South, the *Trobaritz*.

2. The lady is represented as the social and moral superior of the lover.

3. It is an absolute love – not blind or fatal – will and reason are important. She has been chosen for her qualities, and the act of loving will improve the lover.

4. Secrecy is absolutely essential, and the lady is often referred to by another name.

5. It is an obsessive love, but is also self-sufficient. The lover revels in his torment, exalting in a kind of spiritual joy.

6. It is not necessarily a chaste love, but often is perforce. It can be a love from afar. The lyric often represents a moment of distance or absence, recalling or projecting meetings.

7. The form of lyric was that of the *canso*, song. Formal conventions were important. *Cansos* often began with a *reverdie*, a *mise en scène* of the spring time and the renewal of life's forces.

The treatment of love in lyric and love in romance is frequently confused, as discussed

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[97] See *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: le moyen âge*, p. 907, for a concise definition of the *lai arthurien*.

[98] See Baumgartner, *Histoire de la littérature française*, pp. 85-94, and *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: le moyen âge*, pp. 966-976.

in our first chapter. As has been shown since, there is a great difference between lyric and romance which lies in the relationship between speaker and discourse. [99]

Lyric gives a highly focused image of the language of an intense emotional state, discrete, unresolved, unprolonged. Lyric is monologic in that the speaking I controls all other characters, who are reduced to objects, the lady, the *jaloux* or husband, the *lozengier* etc., as are personified aspects of the lover's or lady's character.[100]

Romance narrative focuses on the contradictory and antagonistic images of love, desire, self and other. However, in romance the degree of dialogism may vary. Dialogism in Marie de France or Chrétien de Troyes is at a second degree, since their narrator manipulates the characters overtly. Thomas' *Tristan* resembles them in the narrator's manipulation of characters. Béroul's narrator is perhaps less manipulative of the characters, thereby making the text more dialogic and multi-voiced. In the thirteenth century Jean Renart's *Lai de l'Ombre* is structured as dialogue between a knight and the lady he is trying to seduce, and his *Guillaume de Dole* contains lyric insertions. These texts therefore have great scope for dialogism.

Potentially, romance narrative is a totality of languages and consciousnesses. In lyric, love is an object of poetic expression, problematic maybe for the speaker, but not on a metaphysical or social level. Lyric isolates this love to protect and nurture it; romance opens it up and places it in a social context. It is opened up to the intrusion of another's viewpoint, while still focusing on the central theme of love. This intrusion can include the romance heroine. For example, the *Tristan* legend is fraught with the complications caused by Marc being aware of the lovers' adultery, and also by denouncement from others at court. Given this outside interference, for the purposes of our argument, lyric could be described as monologic and romance as dialogic. The insertion of these potentially monologic genres into the dialogic narrative promises an

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[99] Stephen G. Nicols, 'Amorous Imitation', pp. 47-73.
[100] This is not the case for debate poems.

interesting effect on the portrayal of love in the *Prose Tristan*, and increases its scope for dialogism, through polyphony, with the emergence of different voices competing with the narrator.

It has to be said at the outset that the relationship between Tristan and Iseut, as it is represented in the *Prose Tristan*, and to a certain degree in the verse redactions, does not neatly fit the paradigm of *fin'amor* . In the *Tristan* legend, love is never unrequited. However, Thomas did explore the emotions of love and jealousy, and Béroul explored the hardships of life in hiding. In the *Prose Tristan*, the couple are not subjected to these tests to the same extent. Their main obstacle is Marc, who takes on the role of jealous husband. This shift in the character of Marc does not signify an unproblematic portrayal of adulterous love. Arthur's approval of Tristan and Iseut, for example, is not without irony, given his own status as cuckold, and the exchange with Marc we have just considered raises the problem of the dubious nature of both situations.

The love theme, as explored in the hybrid genre of the Arthurian *lai,* allows us to consider how the *Prose Tristan* interacts and is in dialogue with the love theme of the lyric tradition. In order to do that we need to assess the content of the *lais* and how they are framed in the context of the romance.

Lais Mortels by Tristan and Iseut

The first two *lais* to appear in the romance are both called *lai mortel*, one composed by Tristan, one by Iseut. These *lais* have been the most discussed by critics along with the *lai mortel* by Kaherdin.[101] Tristan's *lai mortel,* (29 octosyllabic, monorhyming quatrains) is composed and related in the text at the point of return from Brittany and his failed marriage to the other Iseut. He believes that Iseut of Cornwall no longer loves him and has fallen for his brother-in-law, Kaherdin. As Tristan prepares himself to die of a broken heart, he harps his song to a young

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[101] See Marie-Noëlle Toury, 'Mourant d'amours', pp. 174-190; idem, 'De Kaherdin à Kahédin', pp. 191-205.

messenger woman, in a scene reminiscent of lyric:

> A l'endemain quant il ajorne...il prent maintenant la harpe et la conmence a acorder si bien et si bel com il le savoit faire...

1. Ja fis chançonetes et lais,
Mes a cest point totes les lais.
Je fais ci mon derïan laiz.
Amors m'ocist. N'est ce biaus laiz?

Here Tristan implies as wide an audience as there was for his other *lais*. He knows that his compositions are circulated and performed by others. The *lai* continues as a meditation on the painful nature of love. It seems quite archaic and *provençal*-like in its content:

3. N'est pas de joie que je chant
Enz comenz en dolor mon chant
Trop m'est amor fiere et tranchant
Qui si vet de moi venchant.

11. Ha! Lancelot, biaus douz amis,
A vos vel je que soi tramis
Cist lais. Amor a mort m'a mis.
Il ne m'avoit pas ce promis.

This apostrophe to Lancelot is a clear reference to their earlier exchange of letters, when Lancelot had tried to reassure him that things would improve in love.

12. D'amors m'est ensi avenu
Com de celi qui a tenu
En son seig le serpent tout nu,
Et puis en est a mort venu.

17. Diex! Com povre chevalerie
Fait amors qui un mort gerrie.
Ma biauté, ma force est perie.
Morz sui. Est por ce amors garie?

There is also a brief address to Iseut:

21. Adieu, Yselt! Adieu, amor!
Ja de vos ne ferai clamor.
Por bien amer a mort demeur.
Je n'ai mes nule autre cremeur.

22. En ma derrïene arramie
Vois priant ma douce anemie
Ysel, qui ja me fu amie,
Qu'aprés ma mort ne m'oblit mie.

The end of the poem reverts to a general address and meditation.

26. J'amai plus que nul hom mortal,
Encore am plus que nus; por tal
Voi je de ma mort le portal.
En moi fine le Lai Mortal.[102]

As with the letters, the character assumes both narration and authorial activity during this generic insertion. The form of the *lai* mean that it stands out from the continual prose. The references to the narrative situation, the supposed betrayal by Iseut, which has brought on his distress, and to the letter received from Lancelot, give it a strong contextual meaning. It cannot be separated from the rest of the narrative when read in context.[103]

Following this *lai*, Tristan goes mad, and, completely marginalised from courtly society, dwells in the countryside living as a wild beast. There are some echoes of Tristan's monologues in Thomas, where he explores the possibility of Iseut's actually being in love with Marc:

Aimt sun signur, a lui se tienge!
Ne ruis que de mei li sovienge!
Ne la blam pas s'ele mei oblie,
Car pur mei ne deit languir mie:
Sa grant belté pas nel requirt,
Ne sa nature n'i afirt,
Quant de lui ad sun desir,
Que pur altre deive languir.[104]

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[102] Curtis III, pp. 169-173
[103] The *lais* have dual status in that they can also be separated from the narrative when sung by someone else as part of a repertoire of songs.
[104] Thomas, *Le Roman de Tristan*, Sneyd manuscript 1, lines 96-103, in *Tristan et Iseut*, ed. by Lacroix and Walter, p. 342.

In both these instances Tristan is mistaken in the belief that Iseut might love another. In Thomas he attempts to overcome the problem through imitation, by himself marrying a double, Iseut of Brittany. In the *Prose Tristan* this marriage has already failed, and his words and actions are closer to the sentiments of the *Prose Lancelot*'s Lancelot in his *folie*, as described in the previous chapter.

Iseut's *lai mortel*, made up of 30 octosyllabic monorhyming quatrains, is composed under slightly different narrative circumstances. She believes Tristan to be dead and her *lai mortel* is a pledge to commit suicide and join him in a lovers' paradise. This is what will effectively happen when they die at the end of the romance. It is worth noting that, while preparing herself for death, Iseut is dressed as a queen in full regalia. She harps the *lai* herself, again, in a scene evoking lyric. The *lai* seems to start as a meditation with no specific addressee, but in the seventh stanza there is an apostrophe to Tristan, with him inscribed as the addressee for the rest of the *lai,* and a final address to all lovers in the last stanza. As with Tristan's *lai*, there is an implication that the *lai* will be transmitted and performed widely. It would seem to be a direct response to Tristan's *lai*:

1. Li solex luist et clers et biaux,
   Et j'oi le dolz chant des oissiaux
   Qui chantent par ces arbroissaus.
   Entor moi font lor chanz noviaux.

7. Tristan, amis, quant vos sai mort,
   premierement maldi la mort
   Qui de vos le monde remort
   Se d'autretel mors ne me mort.

22. Amis, quant por moi estes mort,
    Se por vos muir, ce n'est pas fort.
    Ne vos puis faire autre confort,
    Mais que ge muir por vostre mort.

26. Morir me fait d'amor la flame
    Si fort m'engoisse et si m'enflame
    Qu'el me destruist le cors et l'ame,

Avant mes jors me met soz lame.

30. Mon lay fine, et vos, tuit amant,
Pri ge que vos n'ailliez blasmant
Yselt s'ele muert en amant.
Sa fin vait Tristan reclamant.[105]

Iseut's text is more modern than Tristan's in its insistent use of word play, and use of internal rhyme. In both compositions, apart from the obvious formal differences between lais and the *chant courtois*, there are echoes of *fin 'amor*, such as the play on *mort* and *amor*, and the *reverdie*. The *lai* is staged as if for lyric. However, on the whole this is not a description or portrayal of *fin 'amor*. This is a passion which obsesses both parties and is fatalistic. Both lovers express the distress of the lover, unable to possess or enjoy the object of their affections. This is stronger than obstacles set up by society, as they seem to have had no trouble accepting adultery on principle. The lovers unable to cope with separation are also unable to sublimate their painful love into spiritual joy. Their love is destructive rather than creative, and in both cases their songs are songs of death. These *lais* are strongly influenced by the narrative situation.

The *Lais* of Kaherdin

The next three lais to be considered form another group, but are also linked to the episode which precedes them. Kaherdin is languishing in unrequited love for Iseut, and, in true courtly love fashion, becomes a poet using song as a vehicle for expressing his feelings. As Marie-Noëlle Toury says in her article, 'Morant d'amours', and as discussed earlier, Kaherdin, the brother of Iseut's double in Brittany, is like an unhappy double of Tristan.[106] In love with the same woman, he retreats into death at the same time as Tristan retreats into madness (which is a death to the world). The major difference is that Tristan will recover from his madness whereas Kaherdin does not muster enough will to live to be able to avoid death.

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[105] Curtis III, pp. 225-228
[106] Toury, 'Morant d'amours', pp. 174-190.

The portrayal of Kaherdin's unrequited love from a distance, is seen to come closer to the ideas behind *fin'amor*. The rhetorical play on *mort* and *amor* is strikingly similar to that of the courtly song. There is also the motif of the *belle dame sans merci*, the lover's vassal-like service to his lady and the use of apostrophe and personification to address love. His first *lai* is made up of 14 rhyming couplets:

> Pour bien amer sa plainte fait
> A vous, Amours! De chel fourfait
> Vous prende pitié et mesure!
> Chele ki li fait tel laidure
> Proiiés, requerés en proiiant!
> Alés son cuer humeliiant!
> Or qu'ele ait de son serf merchi!
> Chertes, Amours, je me muir chi.[107]

Kaherdin does not sing to Iseut in person, rather he sends a harpist to do so. In some lyric *cansos* the poet would end with a statement that the song was to be carried by a *jongleur* as a message to the lady. The big difference here is that the lady replies swiftly with a sarcastic reprise of his *lai*. This reply, an utterance from the object of desire herself, has disastrous consequences for the lover/poet. Iseut's reply is measured and cruel as she rejects the obsessive passion relayed to her with a *lai* which begins with the damning riposte 'Folie n'est pas vaselage':

> Ki ainme et set k'il n'est amés
> Bien devroit estre faus clamés!
> Amours ki fait voie perdue
> Est mout povre et mout esperdue.[108]

When the harpist returns to Kaherdin with this reply, it provokes his final downfall, expressed in the composition of his *lai mortel* – a *lai* which really does lead to death on this occasion. We come much closer to the motifs associated with lyric. The three main motifs are set out in the opening stanzas:

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[107] TLF, I, p. 230.
[108] TLF, I, p. 233.

dying of love, the *belle dame sans merci* and reproaches to love personified[109]:

> En morant de si douche mort
> C'ainc nus si dous morsel ne mort,
> Me plaing d'icele ki m'a mort:
> Ardours d'amours a ce m'amort.
>
> Je laisse la prosse pour vers.
> D'amours que jou truis si pervers
> Me lo et plaing et fais ent vers.
> Amours me font gesir envers.

This statement of the differentiation between prose and verse signal the self-conscious authorship of Kaherdin here. Tristan and Iseut do not self-consciously innovate in this way in their *lais mortels*, Tristan's *lai* is imitative, and Iseut uses *annominatio*.

He ends with an *envoi* to the lady:

> Douche dame, vaillans et sage
> Je ne vous puis mander mesage
> De ma mort ne de mon malage
> Fors chest brief. Ne sai s'est folage.
>
> Chest brief ke ma mort vous presente
> Vous mant. Je n'ai mais nule entente
> Fors a mort. Ja Diex ne consente
> Que vostre gens cors tel mal sente![110]

In fact, as these final words reveal, this is in fact a letter, just as Marc's and Dinadan's supposed *lais* were in essence letters. It is therefore more than a vague message sent by *trouvères* to their dedicatees. Therefore, even with the lyric and rhetorical motifs, such as the use of oxymoron in the first lines of the first stanza and the repetitive word-play with *mort* and *amor* throughout, the complaints of the treason and cruelty of love, the metaphors of love's flame and the antithetical representation of the lady as

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[109] Rather than the *belle dame sans merci* motif it would be possible to see the influence of Jean Renart's lady in the *Lai de L'Ombre*. If, as John Stevens suggests, narrative was sung rather than spoken, this exchange between Iseut and Kaherdin would be indistinguishable from a short narrative such as this one. That would imply serious generic interlope, shaking the confidence of the audience in what they are dealing with. See John Stevens, *Words and Music*, pp. 235-265.
[110] TLF I, p. 238-242

'douche dame' and 'icele ki m'a mort', this *lai* cannot be assimilated into a monologic lyric lover tradition. The fact that the *lais* are set to music, along with the staging which has been pointed out, marks them out from the continuous prose, and also from prose monologues. They are set up in opposition to this continuous prose, but rather than being independent units and separate in style and content, they undergo the influence of the narrative context.

Toury goes so far as to say that no knight's love can be truly *fin'amor*. The backdrop of the narrative situation prevents it from being so. The weight of death in the narrative is far too important. The *lais* are not without their own stylistic interest but, for the purposes of our argument, it is the framing context in the narrative which is more important. It is the narrative framework, not the references to lyric, which give these three *lais* their impact. Kaherdin is a suicidal figure here, and can only envisage death, having lost hope in ever gaining the love of his lady.[111]

What is most significant here, though, is the interaction with Iseut. The lady speaks for herself and rejects the advances of the lover. This is something that would never happen in the masculine lyric tradition. Moreover, Iseut appears to lack compassion even when informed of Kaherdin's eventual death. She is angry at the damage it may cause to her reputation. The opinion of courtly society, her place in it (hence her desire to die in the full regalia of the queen), matter more to her than the feelings and life of a knight who loves her. Fulfilling the role of the *belle dame sans merci*, she feels no responsibility for the situation. This is justified to a certain extent, as it is Kaherdin who initiates the whole episode. Whereas he approached it with the self-referential monologue of the *fin'amant*, his reverie was cut across by the voice of the

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[111] The metaphoric death of the lover has also been treated as a real death in the transposition of some lyric into narratives, dealing with the same theme. For example, Jaufré Rudel's poetry inspired the legend that he travelled to Tripoli to see a woman he had loved from afar, without seeing, only to die in her arms. The Châtelain de Coucy, in a narrative inspired by his poetry, is tricked into undertaking a crusade by a jealous husband, the Lord of Fayel, who pretends that he and his wife will be travelling on the Crusade. The Châtelain de Coucy signs up only to find that the Lord and his Wife have stayed at home. He dies on crusade and his heart is sent back to Fayel, who then has it served up to his wife to eat. Learning the terrible truth she dies of a broken heart.

lady, not compliant to his wishes, and all too concerned for public opinion around her.

Iseut's modesty with regard to Kaherdin's public display of passion for her in Cornwall is in some ways surprising, given Arthur's approval of her liaison with Tristan in Logres. In Cornwall she is under pressure already from Marc and some courtiers. The adultery is not approved of and she fears yet more scandal if Kaherdin's plight is discovered. In Logres she is protected from the disapproval of Marc and his courtiers, and is welcomed warmly as Tristan's lady, even making an appearance at the tournament of Louveserp. This must raise another question over the customs and morals of Logres, where adultery, in this instance, seems to be condoned.

This episode of the three *lais mortels*, by Tristan, Iseut and Kaherdin, as well as exploring the love theme, also parallels the triangular exchange between Marc, Guinevere and Dinadan, just discussed. Marc and Dinadan both play with the form, content and performative context of their compositions. Marc's *lai* to Guinevere is in fact a letter; and Dinadan's *lai voir disant*, albeit true, intends to bring shame upon Marc in a publicly humiliating situation. Iseut's *lai* to Kaherdin, in appearance, a tender reply to his petition, contains harsh and crushing words for her admirer. Her previous reply to his first advance is not quoted by the narrator but is described in indirect speech.[112] It contains false information as Iseut gives early reassurance to Kaherdin in an effort to appease his feelings, and in the hope that he would soon come to his senses. In both these examples appearances have deceived; the characters who compose the communications have mixed form and content, creating confusion and ultimately dismay for the recipient. It is the characters here who are responsible for subverting language, disputing its previous usage and undermining the expectations of their addressees. In Bakhtinian terms this is a clear example of double-voiced discourse, where different styles interact and are imbued with different meanings and voices.

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[112] Curtis III, pp. 138-139.

Lamorat and Palamedés

The last two figures to be considered are also closely linked to, and at times parallel, the figure of Tristan in the romance. Lamorat is Tristan's double, Palamedés his rival.

Lamorat's narrative situation is similar to that of Tristan. He loves and is loved by the Queen of Orkney, who is the mother of Gawain and Gaheriet. They lead the precarious existence of an adulterous couple whose liaison is not approved of by immediate family.[113] Not long after his foray into Logres, Marc overhears Lamorat singing a *lai* by a fountain. Marc's cuckold status adds irony to the context. He is obliged to listen to a young knight singing of this illicit love for a queen, a love which is being opposed by her family. In another dialogic twist, Marc, the wronged, jealous husband, is confronted with the point of view of one who identifies with his enemy. Lamorat openly identifies with Tristan in his dilemma and, in a scenario echoing Tristan's early prose letter to Lancelot, wishes to share his grief with his peer:

> Morant d'amours en amours vif
> Or muir d'amours,or en revif
> Or me truis mort, or me truis vif,
> Or m'estaint et or me ravif.
> ...
> Au boin Tristran, au preu, au sage,
> Qi passe tout l'umain lingnage
> De bonté et de vasselage,
> Le manderai par mon message.[114]

The *lai* is very rhetorical demonstrating instability posited by antithesis, which will become the staple of later medieval lyric. The prose around the *lai* is also lyrical, both from the narrator and the character. Lamorat, in a prose monologue which continues

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[113] This love affair, which implicates the whole family of the lady, could be seen to question, dialogically, the traditional hermetic triangle of both *fin 'amor* lyric and the Tristan and Lancelot stories.

[114] TLF IV, pp. 77 - 80.

after his *lai* proceeds to further compare his situation to Tristan's as he berates Gaheriet:

> Cil me fait bien de riche povre, chil me fait tout autretel bonté, com fait li rois Marc a monsigneur Tristran, car tout autresi com li rois Marc eslonge monsigneur Tristran de ses amours, tout autresi fait moi Gaheriés, li boins chevaliers.[115]

As previously mentioned, the interference of Gaheriet, who is considered a *boins chevaliers*, epitomises the difference between this affair and the Tristan / Marc and Lancelot / Arthur relationships. Lamorat's torment is caused by the interference of his lover's family, and the threats they have made. His worst fears will come true and he is indeed eventually slain by his lover's son, Gawain.[116] Prior to that the queen is beheaded while lying next to her lover for bringing shame on the family name, by another son, Gaheriet.[117] Her son spares the knight himself as it would be too great a loss for chivalry, a provocative detail with respect to any gender debate within the text.

Maureen Boulton has stated that the purpose of the insertions is to enable monologue.[118] Yet, the so-called monologue is framed in a troubled context, which cuts across the lover's reverie. In this instance Lamorat is overheard against his will and he unwittingly insults Marc. Lamorat's complaint is on the subject of the obstacles to love, especially the disapproval of society, in this case the Queen's own sons. The lover is only too aware of the complicated nature of his situation, and his monologue becomes an unintentional dialogue with King Marc.

The final lover to be considered is Palamedés. His relationship with Tristan has already been looked at in the previous section. Appearing very early on in the

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[115] TLF IV, p. 80

[116] Lamorat's death is not described in detail, but is briefly reported by the narrator when summing up at the end of TLF IV, p. 349.

[117] See TLF IV, p. 233 for the death of the Queen of Orkney at the hands of her son, Gaheriet.

[118] Maureen Boulton, *The Song in the Story,* Boulton uses monologue in the sense of the interior 'monologues' of twelfth-century romance, rather than in a Bakhtinian sense.

narrative, he falls in love with the young Iseut in Ireland long before Tristan does, and without prompting from a rival. From that day forward he is single-minded and obsessive in his unrequited love. Driven to despair on more than one occasion, he nonetheless clings to the hope of one day outshining Tristan and earning the love of Iseut. His attitude would seem to be closest to that of a *fin amant.* His *lai* is the one which most fulfils the criteria of lyric in content:

> Tout mi pensé et mi deduit
> D'amer me viennent jour et nuit;
> Or me fait veoir et m'esduit;
> U que j'aille, ele me conduit.
>
> Amours m'a pris, Amours me lache,
> Comme son serf me loie et lache.
> Il m'est avis que je l'embrache,
> Quant je puis remirer sa fache.
> ...
> Douche amours, souef odourant
> Plus que basme, a vos vois courant.
> Tous jours prierai en ourant
> Que vous me soiiés secourant.
> ...
> Amours, ves com j'ai le vis taint
> De la dolur qui si m'ataint;
> Mon esperit par poi n'estaint.
> Se ne m'aidiés, la mort m'ataint.
>
> Pour vous, dame, ai chest lay ditié
> De chant et de dit afaitié.
> Se par vous n'est a chief traitié,
> Mar vi ains biauté sans pitié![119]

While singing this Palamedés is sitting by a fountain, a common motif, and is also overheard unbeknown to him, something of a recurring motif in the *Prose Tristan.* It is in fact Tristan himself who overhears Palamedés' lament and in the fashion of courtly lyric reacts like a *jaloux*. This is an episode which brings out the shift in Tristan from lover to *jaloux*, as discussed in chapter four. He tells Palamedés that he

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[119] TLF VI, p. 99.

will die for this. Palamedés' response is disarmingly honest:

> Mesire Tristrans, dist il, que vas tu disant? Dis tu que je sui mauvais se j'aim la plus bele dame du monde?[120]

Ideologically his reply also challenges a whole system. It is a remark which raises more doubts about Tristan's integrity as a lover. The exclusive nature of his passion for Iseut is at odds with the fact that their liaison is adulterous. The justification for the adultery could possibly lie in the *fin'amor* tradition, but if this is so, he should not challenge other knights who are also attracted to her beauty. As Palamedés does, he should purely concentrate on his adoration of her and on the improving nature of this love. Indeed, apart from the justification of *fin'amor*, Marc is rightfully in possession of Iseut, as they are married.

Unlike the other lovers, Palamedés does not give up hope, or complain about the obstacles to love. He refuses to give up hope of one day deserving Iseut's love and recognition, and this hope will inspire him to ever greater deeds.

From these few examples it can be seen that the generic insertions in the *Prose Tristan*, privileged moments of monologue from the characters, are shot through with tension from the narrative's framing context. The love topos is contextualised and the lyric themes are indeed subsumed within the prose. The hybrid genre of the Arthurian *lai* deals with the topos of love, stands out from the prose by its versification and musical setting, but in the end lends itself to novelness, through its very mix of features.

There is also a hybridisation of *lais* and letters, with each masquerading as the other at a given time. Originating in the first person singular, I, the letters are inherently dialogic in that they expect a response. When the exchange becomes triangular the

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[120] TLF VI, p. 101.

dynamics are further complicated and the expectations of the characters involved risk being undermined. Guinevere, Marc and Kaherdin are all on the receiving end of double-voiced discourse. The voices of the characters can be heard creating a polyphonic effect in the text. The narrator manipulates the framing context. This can either confirm or compete with what is being said by the characters. Characters themselves can also embody this hybridisation of genres.

Palamedés is a character through whom the dialogue of the different genres is represented. In one of his finest moments as a lover, following yet another lament on the hardships of his unrequited love, he launches into a prose monologue which extols the virtues and beauty of Iseut:

> Ha, dame! Flours des flours, biautés des biautés enterines, ki passés orendroit de biauté toutes les biautés de chest monde, autresi com la lune passe toutes les etoiles de biauté et de clarté, ma dame ki estes sans per, ki per n'eüstes ne n'arés de biauté, ne de valor, dame ki estes mireour si clere et si resplendissant, si luisant merveilleusement que la ou vous estes orendroit, en Cornuaille, si a vostre biauté tel force qu'ele me donne chi clarté, luour et resplendissour ki naist de vostre grant biauté, dame, merci, merchi! N'oubliés Palamidés, li plus loiaus et li plus fins amans ki soit orendroit en cest monde.[121]

The lyric nature of this paragraph is quite striking.[122] The paragraph is punctuated by repetition of apostrophe and metonymy. Iseut is called 'flours des flours' and 'mireour si clere'. 'Dame' recurs as the most frequent form of address. It is the transposition of a lyric poem, which is yet another example of generic interference. Indeed, it is in the voice of Palamedés that the lyrical dimension of the meditation on love, implicit in Thomas' *Tristan*, and Chrétien's *Lancelot*, is reintroduced to a *Tristan* story that has lost that very feature by its assimilation to chivalric romance.

Highly poetic and lyrical in nature, the lover seems to delight in his torment. This monologue, overheard like so many others, then provokes a debate on the nature of

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[121] TLF IV, p. 152
[122] Plet, 'L'Usage des appellatifs', p. 220.

love over the following pages between Dinadan, Palamedés and Marc. Dinadan, true to his humorous, cynical self, claims that love simply isn't worth it. Marc says that he wishes he could share in Dinadan's light-heartedness but alas he does not have control over his heart.[123] It is another example of a monologue's being dialogised by the narrative context, and subject to the dissenting presence of other voices.

The use of prose for such monologues would seem to be an innovation of the *Prose Tristan*. Emmanuèle Baumgartner describes the lovers' monologues as *la prose amoureuse*.[124] The phenomenon of osmosis results in a synthesis of styles between the verse and the prose:

> Entre la prose narrative et l'expression lyrique, il existe cependant dans le *Tristan* toute une gamme de discours intermédiaires qui remodèlent au format neuf de la prose des modes d'expression bien attestés dans les romans en vers, comme le monologue...
> Quant à l'amour impossible que vouent à la reine Kahédin, Palamède, d'autres chevaliers encore, il ne connaît d'autre manifestation, d'autre ressource que le monologue dont le *Tristan* donne les premières formulations en prose.[125]

Contributing further to this osmosis of discourse is the way the narrator's prose becomes more rhetorical when approaching a more lyrical passage, either verse or prose, as though somehow to prepare the audience for the passage to come. One example can be found where Marc is about to overhear Lamorat's *lai* by the fountain, and he first observes the knight:

> Tous seus vient et tous seus deschent, et tous seus pense de son cheval au mieus k'il puet, et le laisse aler paistre par mi la praerie, et tous seus se vait desarmer.[126]

It would seem that just as the lyric insertions have been influenced to the point of contamination by the prose, so our prose has been contaminated by the lyric. On a

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[123] TLF IV, pp. 153-159.
[124] Baumgartner, *La Harpe et l'épée*, p. 124.
[125] Baumgartner, *La Harpe et l'épée*, pp. 124-128.
[126] TLF IV, p. 77.

sliding scale of objective prose and subjective lyric we have prosaic lyric and lyrical prose. This hybridisation and contamination seals what can be called the 'dialogisation of love'. There is no one privileged discourse of love. Furthermore the voices may seem separate and have defined boundaries of versification and continuous prose, yet they cannot be carved off as self-sufficient units in the romance. The different voices are engaged in a dialogue and exist in relation to one another. Likewise, or as a corollary of this, it is impossible to identify a prevailing or dominant ideology in the text. Love would seem to be associated with death and passion. It is arguably a negative portrayal of *amor*, which sees folly win out over reason. Love may lead to death and misfortune but most of the characters pursue it, producing their most noble deeds and words in the process.[127]

Conclusion

In Chapter three we saw how there is a tension between the authority of the narratorial *je* and *li contes* in the organisation of the account which helps bring out the conflicting ideologies contained in the romance. In this chapter we have seen how, intra-diegetically, the narrator is also interacting with the voices of characters, who introduce heteroglossia into the romance, through generic insertions. The multiple voices and variety of speech types in the *Prose Tristan* endow it with a complexity it is not often credited with. The interanimation of the different voices creates a polyphonic effect and a depth which have helped the romance survive and endure as a productive subject of literary criticism in the present day.

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[127] This is already true to a certain extent in the *Prose Lancelot*, especially in Lancelot's earlier adventures, where there is a strong link between love and prowess.

Conclusion

This study has concentrated on the intricacies of the narrative technique in the *Prose Tristan*, focusing on features of novelistic discourse in the text, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin. The result has not been a perfect fit between text and theory. An important aspect of the *Prose Tristan* which is problematic in relation to the Bakhtinian model is the role of the narrator, where the display of 'surplus of knowledge' would appear to be contrary to the spirit of novelness. Notwithstanding this, as demonstrated, the text does contain the following novelistic tendencies, characteristic of texts which Bakhtin saw as precursors of the nineteenth-century novel: there is no one dominant narratorial voice, with the text containing the tradition of *li contes*, which is subject to undermining and questioning from the narrator's *je*, but not completely rejected. The text's chronology can be described as being predominantly governed by *temps quantitatif*. This is counter-balanced by *temps qualitatif* in the guise of repetition and recurring motifs. However, the *temps qualitatif* of the *Prose Tristan* lacks the eschatological and Christian dimension of the Grail. The final union of the lovers is in death, nothingness and emptiness, with no repentance, declared hope or promise of resurrection in the Christian sense. Characters and themes interact dialogically, rather than being self-contained oppositions. There is a variety of discourse in the text, heteroglossia, and the respective voices interact to produce polyphony.[1]

The text's dialogism operates on an inter-textual level as well as on an intra-textual level. There is certainly much opposition within the *Prose Tristan* to the tradition established by the *Lancelot-Graal*. Many critics have observed this and declared the *Prose Tristan* as both undermining and rejecting the tradition which preceded it. Yet, the Christian element is present. Tristan and Iseut may not have a Christian death, but another central character, Palamedés, does, and the final adventures of Galahad are interpolated, almost verbatim, from the *Queste del Saint Graal*. Any conclusions to be drawn must take all of this into account. The *Lancelot-Graal* is dialogised by

[1] Some of these novelistic features in the *Prose Tristan*, in particular the dialogical interaction of themes and characters, can also be identified in the *Prose Lancelot*, its predecessor. They are, however, developed and exploited to a far greater extent in the *Prose Tristan*.

the *Prose Tristan*, as the two works interact and merge. It is both by incorporating elements of the *Lancelot-Graal* within itself, recontextualising it, and by inducing an alternative reading of the earlier romance in its own context, that the *Prose Tristan* dialogises the *Lancelot-Graal*. Given the historical situation of the text the resultant contradictions inherent in the portrayal of chivalry can be seen to be:

> indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality...[2]

The conclusion of the *Prose Tristan*, as we saw, anticipates the *Mort Artu*, without recounting it, but leaves the fate of Cornwall indeterminate. The nature of dialogic texts is to avoid or challenge didacticism and to provoke debate from within. They also interact with the world around them. This is an area of dialogic investigation which needs to be addressed but was beyond the scope of the present study. It would be interesting to try and discern how the fictitious portrayal of chivalry in this romance interacted with the extra-textual world that gave it being. Jean Flori claims that the thirteenth century was a period of great stability and success for chivalry.[3] Therefore, it could be claimed that the *Prose Tristan* may have undermined the ideology of the Grail, but did not contribute to a worldly undermining of chivalry in the eyes of contemporary society.

What is also needed to continue this debate is a close analysis of what follows the *Prose Tristan* in the romance tradition. We know that its manuscript tradition was alive and being transmitted from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth century in France, and also that it was translated and adapted in other European languages, along with the Grail tradition.[4] Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1469), the Italian *Tavola Ritonda* (fourteenth century), and the Spanish *Libro del esforzado caballero don Tristan de Leonis y de sus grandes hechos en armas* (1528), all draw heavily on the

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[2] Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', in *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 6.
[3] Jean Flori, *La Chevalerie en France au Moyen Âge*, Que sais-je? 972, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995), p. 123.
[4] Danielle Buschinger, 'La réception du *Tristan en prose* française en Europe au Moyen Age', in *Tristan-Studien*, pp. 65 - 71.

Prose Tristan, and would seem to give a relatively orthodox rendition of the chivalric tradition. There are also texts, such as the *Post-Vulgate Cycle* which incorporated episodes from the *Prose Tristan* back into a new version of the *Lancelot-Graal* story. These texts need to be assessed with the *Prose Tristan* as their dialogising background.[5]

Colette Van Coolput sees the *Prose Tristan* as subverting the romance tradition and having an irrevocable effect:

> ...après le Tristan, le roman arthurien en prose, jusque-là si homogène, éclate et part dans toutes les directions. *Guiron le Courtois* et la compilation de Rusticien de Pise vont dans la voie indiquée par le *Tristan en Prose*.
> ...
> Le *Tristan en prose* était donc bien le lieu et le moment d'une mutation, qui a provoqué la crise du roman en prose.... Le caractère fortement théocentrique des premiers romans du *Graal* est ainsi visiblement atténué, chose qui est sensible aussi dans la conception du Temps.[6]

Therefore to complete the dialogic reading of the *Prose Tristan* would require assessing different strands of the tradition which followed it, in terms both of the narrative technique and ideological orthodoxy, along with an examination of how this literary tradition was interacting with its context. It would also require a new assessment of what really constituted that orthodoxy at different periods between 1200 and 1500.

There can be no neat conclusion to a dialogic reading, as each statement and response in turn anticipates the next contribution to the debate. The discussion can never be closed. However, what we can assert is that submitting the *Prose Tristan* to a literary analysis in the light of Bakhtin's ideas has indeed helped to shed new light on this

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[5] In his work *Clôtures du cycle arthurien: étude et textes*, (Genève: Droz, 1996), Richard Trachsler has begun some work on this. In one example of how the *Prose Tristan* was received, he assesses the later manuscript BN fr. 24400 which suggests a closure of the cycle by filling in the gap between Tristan's death and that of Arthur. He sees this as an attempt to '(d')accomplir l'histoire de Tristan', (p. 236).

[6] Colette Van Coolput, *Aventures querant*, pp. 218-220.

remarkable text, on its dialogic qualities, both intra-textual and inter-textual, thereby preparing the ground for further dialogic study of Medieval romance. In the spirit of dialogue it is also the case that reading Bakhtin with the *Prose Tristan* in mind has required moving back the boundaries of the novelistic chronologically, thereby questioning the teleological nature of Bakhtin's thought and his own appraisal of romance. In so doing, far from undermining the theory, this study has shown that despite inherent weaknesses, which are inevitable in such an inclusive approach, dialogism remains a valuable critical tool for questioning received wisdom and pre-conceived ideas.

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